

R E A S O N S
AGAINST
NATIONAL DESPONDENCY;
&c. &c. &c.

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S C A R C I T Y O F S P E C I E .

Nec ego pacem nolo: Sed pacis nomine bellum involutum reformido.
Quare si pace frui volumus, bellum gerendum est. Si bellum omittimus,
pace nunquam fruemur.

L O N D O N :

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1797.



REFUTATION,

&c. &c.

THE appearance of a book written by Mr. Erskine, has naturally excited the public attention. The subject which it embraces is most important, and the crisis at which it appears is momentous.

The ingenuity of the Author, and the influence of his name, will have considerable effect upon the public mind: but the general attraction of his topics, during a period of despondency, will have infinitely more. Engines like these, which are so powerful to move the general opinion, are at all times to be watched with anxiety. They constitute a force, the effect of which may be dangerous, even when the object of the writer is salutary. But,

in the present period, we ought to place a double guard upon all undue means by which the national opinion may be influenced.

It is the most awful moment which this country has ever experienced. The threatened invasion, and the temporary embarrassment in her medium of circulation, are the least formidable of those dangers which menace her prosperity. But whatever these dangers may be, (and these I shall hereafter point out,) I trust that Great Britain will not be afraid to face them as she ought. She will reflect, that it is upon her firm and steady conduct at this period, that her honour and happiness, as a great people, must depend.

Thinking, as I do from my soul, that Mr. Erskine's View of the Causes and Consequences of the present War with France, is not calculated to inspire this country with such sentiments as accord with her present situation—that it tends to advise measures derogatory to her pristine glory, unworthy of her present power, and inconsistent with her future safety; I do not need an apology for the attempt to refute his opinions.

But while I endeavour to shew that the work is fallacious in its statements, erroneous in its reasoning, and noxious to the interests of the country in its object; I trust that I shall not be found to transgress

that decorum which is due to myself, Mr. Erskine, and the Public.

For the Author I entertain the highest personal respect. I admire his talents as an advocate; I acknowledge his sincerity as a statesman: but I question the soundness of his political opinions. I am not instigated to the exercise of this undoubted right by any personal motive which can carry me beyond the bounds of fair discussion; I am not connected with any party which might influence my judgment; I shall reap neither honour nor emolument from a continuance or a change in the Ministry: I neither have, nor can have, any interest distinct from that of the community at large; and I am warmed by no other zeal, but an ardent wish that the country may act in a manner becoming its ancient character and its genuine interest.

I trust therefore, that I shall not misconceive Mr. Erskine's reasoning: I certainly shall not misrepresent it by design. It is with the main body of his argument that I intend to cope, without the use of sophistry or sarcasm. I will not advert to his imperfections as a writer, his inaccuracies and redundancies, or trivial contradictions; neither will I urge a single remark with the view of fastening a sting upon his private feelings. Still, however, this is not a season in which necessary truths should be tempered and softened down by compliment. I

shall therefore speak of men and measures with decency, but with firmness, and without reserve.

The outline of Mr. Erskine's Pamphlet is briefly as follows :

“ Mr. Pitt, convinced of the necessity of a Parliamentary Reform, but aware that it could not be carried into effect without a temporary sacrifice of his situation as Minister, preferred the possession of his place to the interest of the Nation. Influenced by this selfish view, he resolved upon a war with France, (at that time in a state of revolution,) as the only means to frustrate the measure. To render his expedient popular in the country, he used undue means to alarm the nation with fancied terrors for the safety of the constitution. He took advantage of the unguarded zeal of particular Societies for a Parliamentary Reform, and falsely charged them with a design to establish a republican form of government in the empire, and with the attempt to introduce a revolution, similar in all its consequences to that which had taken place in France. The Royal Proclamation, 21st May 1792, was issued from these motives ; and its immediate object was to counteract the efforts of the Society called the Friends of the People, to obtain a Parliamentary Reform. If supported by the friends of Ministry alone, it must have proved ineffectual.

tual. But, to give it force, the disunion of the
 Whig Party was necessary, and this had been
 treacherously secured. Keeping a war with
 France in view, the Minister filled the national
 mind with a false suggestion, that a correspond-
 ence had taken place between the disaffected at
 home and the Rulers of that country; and he in-
 juriously charged France with a design, which ~~she~~
 never entertained, of overturning our monarchi-
 cal establishment. Mr. Pitt's hostility to the
 French revolution, is considered by Mr. Erskine
 as being decided and invariable from its com-
 mencement. This is assigned as the true cause
 why our Ministry refused to mediate between
 France and the Combined Powers, at the request
 of the unfortunate Louis. But the imprisonment
 of that unhappy Monarch is represented as fur-
 nishing the British Cabinet with a pretext for
 measures which led more speedily and decidedly
 to a rupture. They recalled our Ambassador
 from Paris, and commenced a correspondence,
 on our part haughty, unjust, and insulting, with
 Monsieur Chauvelin. Deaf to the humble re-
 monstrances of France, and regardless of her
 pacific disposition, they refused to accept her ex-
 planation, or even to negotiate for the demands
 which they had made. Stimulated by this prin-
 ciple, they denied to acknowledge her govern-
 ment, and dismissed her ambassador with dis-
 grace. To such conduct the commencement of

“ the war is attributed ; a war which, it is said, was
 “ entered into by France with unwillingness, and
 “ which our Ministry provoked, when we might
 “ have compromised our differences by the means
 “ of negotiation.”

Such is Mr. Erskine’s account of the causes which gave rise to the present War. He states its object to be decidedly the same as that which is attributed to the other Combined Powers ; the dismemberment of France, and the restitution of her ancient despotic government : And this object of War Mr. Erskine alleges to be unjust, impolitic, impracticable, and chimerical.

The Author’s view of the consequences of the War must necessarily have a strong connexion with the cause which he assigns for its commencement. “ The British Cabinet prosecuted the contest for a “ considerable period, with a view to effect the “ wished-for alteration in the French government. “ With this view, it unjustifiably encouraged and “ fomented insurrections in France, and it neglect-“ ed to proffer peace when our success had insured “ its attainment.

“ Frustrated, at length, in these designs by the “ glorious victories of France, and apprehensive “ of a change in the popular opinion at home, it is
 “ said that the Cabinet has abandoned the principle
 “ upon

“ upon which it commenced hostilities ; yet that, “ being still faithful to misconduct, it has adopted “ one equally improper and unjust,—the cession “ of territories which we have no right to demand, “ and to obtain which it would be impolitic to “ protract peace, even if we had the right. It is “ farther contended, that the British Cabinet was “ not sincere in their wishes for peace, upon the “ very terms which they proposed : and this is ar- “ gued from the facts which have transpired re- “ specting the negotiations themselves. From “ these data the French are justified in their treat- “ ment of Mr. Wickham’s proposal, and are de- “ clared inculpable for the dismissal of Lord “ Malmesbury.”

The conclusions which are drawn from these positions, and which Mr. Erskine labours to inculcate upon the people of this empire, are,—“ That “ peace is to be made at any rate, as necessary to “ the prosperity and absolute salvation of the coun- “ try : That the annexation of Belgium to France “ should not be an insurmountable bar to its con- “ clusion : That to carry this measure into effect “ without national degradation, to recall prosperity “ and freedom to Great Britain, the present Mi- “ nistry must be displaced ; and Mr. Fox, Mr. “ Sheridan, and Mr. Erskine, and their friends, “ should constitute the Cabinet of a new Admi- “ nistration.”

Such is the sum and substance of the book which I purpose to examine. I have stated it as plainly and as fairly as I am able: I trust that I shall discuss it in the same spirit. I do not wish to justify the conduct of Ministry farther than their measures warrant, and the interests of the country require: I shall not arraign that of Opposition except on a similar principle.

With Mr. Pitt's conduct respecting a Parliamentary Reform, I have no concern, except so far as Mr. Erskine pronounces it to be the source of the present War. It is beyond the limit of my present design to agitate the propriety of the measure itself; but be it ever so necessary, I am sure that all attempts to compass it by means of popular associations ought to be condemned, inasmuch as they are inadequate to obtain their object, and are highly dangerous to our national tranquillity.

It is the observation of Montesquieu, whose exalted genius and extensive knowledge qualified him to become a reformer; "that to propose alterations belongs only to those who are so happy as to be born with a genius capable of penetrating into the entire constitution of a State." The ablest men will see the greatest difficulties. "They perceive the ancient abuses; they see how they must be reformed, but they are sensible also of the abuses of the reformation. They let the "evil

“ evil continue, if they fear a worse ; they are content with a lesser good, if they doubt of a greater ; they examine into the parts, to judge of them in connexion ; and they examine all their causes, to discover their different effects.”

Can an indiscriminate assemblage of the people lay claim to these qualifications, so essential to the task they would undertake ? Were such stupendous talents to be found in the meeting at Chalk Farm, or even in a majority of the Friends of the People ? But though the people are incapable of comprehending those measures which they are supposed to originate, it is easy to delude them into a notion that they do. An ambitious man will mislead our passions and our virtues, that he may promote his private views. Discontent and dissatisfaction are easily excited under the specious pretext of Reform, but with the real view of supplanting a Minister. He who rises into office by such artificial popularity, despises the very means which he has used to acquire it. The measure has then served its purpose, and is of course neglected. But other patrons are still found, who will urge it with similar hopes, and the people are doomed again to confide, and to be again disappointed. Happy is it for the nation, if the only consequence of these appeals to the vulgar judgment, is a change of Ministry. The great danger that is to be dreaded, is an intemperate change of the Constitution itself : that the people, maddened

by

by disappointment, should listen to the factious and precipitate counsels of desperate men: that, like Sampson in his bonds, blind but omnipotent, they should pull down ruin on themselves, to be avenged of their deceivers.

The principle upon which this opinion is built, is not peculiar to any country or climate; it is the universal eternal law of man, ascertained by universal experience. From the earliest revolutions noticed in history, down to the present period, from the days of Pisistratus to those of Robespierre, it will be found, that wherever the body of the people have interfered with theoretical plans of government, they have been deceived, disappointed, and generally enslaved *.

* A recent instance may teach us to appreciate the difference in value between the attempts at Reform, by means of an Association, and the efforts of an enlightened individual.

Disgusted at the disgraces of the American war, and alarmed at the increase of the national burdens, several counties, in 1779, petitioned the House of Commons for retrenchment and reform in the general expenditure. The subscribers of these petitions appointed committees to watch their progress in the House, and to promote their success. But these committees soon neglected the very object they were created to support. They substituted the design to re-organize the lower House of Parliament, although not one of the petitions, excepting that from Nottingham, complained of the state of our representation, or hinted at the necessity of a Parliamentary Reform. Led away by this scheme, they assembled, they addressed the people, obtained petitions from them, excited curiosity, and effect-

ed

If the measure be thus fundamentally dangerous, it is to be condemned and rejected, whether it comes from the Minister in place, or from the Patriot

ed nothing. But while these gentlemen neglected the original instructions of their constituents, the task of fulfilling them had fallen into abler hands. The Reform pointed out by the Nation was undertaken by Mr. Burke. He introduced his Bills for the better securing the Independence of Parliament. They were prefaced by a speech which can never be excelled. It is not the fertility of his fancy, the beauty of his language, the force of his illustrations, which excite our wonder ; these are the common attributes of uncommon genius. It is his indefatigable research, his laborious attention, his minute examination, his comprehensive views, his cautious progress, that command our astonishment. Mild, gradual but decided in his plan, he reconciles the rights of individuals with the public welfare. He examines the diseases of the constitution with the skill of a statesman, but with the feelings of a father. His system is to watch and follow Nature, not to force her. He probes the wound with gentleness and with caution, but with a fixed eye and firm hand, and does not venture to use the knife until he is assured that the part is radically unsound. By perseverance, Mr. Burke effected a great deal of what he proposed : but he might have done more, if the committees had co-operated with his industry and his zeal. He has left an eternal monument behind him. But what was done by them ? They were soon divided and dispersed ; they performed nothing, and were speedily forgotten.

Mr. Burke's plan was certainly of great extent ; but its magnitude dwindles to insignificance, when compared with the compass of that Reform which the Associators have laboured to introduce. Yet what man who can estimate himself will attempt more than Mr. Burke could venture to undertake ? This lesson should be a strong one to all Reformers ; but it should be infinitely more strong to the People. It will shew that Associators are useless

riot who struggles to succeed him. I do not mean to impute improper motives either to the Duke of Richmond, Mr. Pitt, or Mr. Erskine, who have adopted this system in their turn. I will not speculate on the motives of any man. The same measure may undoubtedly be salutary at one season, and pernicious at another; and it may, of consequence, be opposed and supported at different times by the very same men, without any just imputation on their consistency. The situation of the public mind, and the peculiar current of existing events, must undoubtedly influence a real statesman to reject or press forward a particular measure. We may therefore estimate his talents for his situation, by the justness of his foresight, and the effects of his counsels. But, looking at our own hearts, we ought to consider the fallibility, and, I trust, the general integrity of mankind; and we should not rashly conclude, that the motive must be necessarily dishonest, because the measure is unwise.

The objection therefore points at these schemes, by whomsoever they are proposed. It is, that all plans which endeavour to enforce a Parliamentary

useless and inefficient, even when their designs are honest. There is but one alternative. They must either control the Government, or soon sink into insignificance. This last was the fortunate fate of these Associators, and of the Friends of the People. Should their power prove paramount to that of the Legislature, they will overthrow it. It was thus that the Jacobin Club annihilated at pleasure every government which rose up in France with mushroom expedition.

Reform

Reform by means of popular Associations are either mischievous or idle; mere spouting clubs, or paramount and domineering legislatures.

I do not urge this with a view either to impute blame to Mr. Erskine, or to rescue Mr. Pitt from the charge of inconsistency. But I urge it to prove, that the effort of the Friends of the People to procure a Parliamentary Reform in 1792, by means of their Association, was at least imprudent. That being so, it might have been frustrated by measures less dangerous but more effectual, than that of a war with France. If a Parliamentary Reform was to be promoted by such peaceable means as the constitution allows, what danger could ensue to the Minister from opposing it? It was not a greater favourite with the Nation in 1792, when introduced into the House of Commons by Mr. Grey, than in 1782, or in 1783, or in 1785, when introduced by Mr. Pitt. In 1782, the Nation was discontented with Parliament, as the instrument which had continued our calamitous contest with America. In 1783, the country was even more inflamed against their representatives, from the recent coalition between Mr. Fox and Lord North. In 1785, the motion was brought forward by Mr. Pitt, who was then in office. If suspicions of insincerity could attach upon his conduct, it would have done so at that time, when it might have been supposed that his influence as Minister could have carried what he had in vain attempted

attempted under the Rockingham administration, and under that of Mr. Fox. Even in these critical times the measure was defeated, without a murmur from the people ; and the Minister remained in office, with the confidence of the country. In 1792, when Mr. Grey made his motion, those who opposed it derived new strength from an argument which was unanswerable. The season was peculiarly unfitted to such an attempt. France was in a state of revolution. In Great Britain the public mind was influenced and agitated by the example *. Ambitious and dangerous men had laboured to impress opinions not only hostile to the corruptions, but to the very being of the constitution. All Europe was preparing for war. Surely this was no time to make a hazardous experiment upon the forms of our government. To have agreed to the motion, would have been to condemn the existing Legislature as unserviceable and rotten ; to encourage discontent among the people, without pointing out any effectual means of redress. Nothing was prepared to substitute in the place of the constitution which was thus to be reprobated. This ancient and superb edifice, the pride of our ancestors, the envy of Europe, the solid monument of our national virtue and national wisdom, was to be despoiled of its hereditary honours. This sure fastness against oppression, this noble mansion, whose hospitable doors were opened for

* Mr. Erskine, p. 11. and p. 13.

the equal happiness of the wealthy and the poor, was to be laid prostrate with the dust ; even before the plan was drawn upon which another was to be built. Schemes of Constitutional Reform had been devised by Lord Chatham, Mr. Pitt, Mr. Flood, and by many others, but none had been generally approved. Mr. Fox, although a friend to the general principle of Reform, had uniformly objected to any particular plan. Even the Friends of the People were at variance upon the modifications of their plan, at the time when they precipitately pressed for an inquiry. This inability to devise a more perfect system, is the true panegyric of our constitution, as it stands. The very great men to whom I have alluded could not suggest any improvement which appeared even plausible in theory, or which it was not judged madness to oppose to the sure test of experience. Like the Athenian picture, when the public judgment is passed as to particular faults, the Constitution stands covered with marks of individual disapprobation ; but call the same public to discriminate its beauties, and these very marks of censure serve to note its perfections—the painting was the work of Parrhasius, and the wonder of the world.

Supposing therefore that Mr. Pitt was in reality hostile to the measures of Reform, which I do not believe, yet what had he to fear for his place by any constitutional efforts which might be made to effect it under circumstances such as these ? The step

Step of itself was of dubious consequence. No specific plan was pointed out, by which a change could be effected with the general concurrence.

The measure had been peremptorily rejected by the House of Commons, under every administration, and it was scarcely a favourite with the people. Often as it had been proposed, and as often as it had been frustrated, no administration had been shaken by the consequence. Under the existing crisis, innovation and experiment were absolutely dangerous. Yet, with all these means for defeating ; with all these grounds for opposing the motion ; with reason and experiment before his eyes, a man like Mr. Pitt is supposed to have plunged this nation into a war with France, which might shake the continuance of his power—and this, to avoid a measure which he could have laid quietly to rest by the previous question.

To conceive that Mr. Pitt acted from such views, is to suppose him actuated by some desperate phrenzy, and not “that masterly skill and boldness, without example,” which Mr. Erskine is pleased to fancy. It is to suppose, that he set the universe in motion to destroy an insect which lay gasping within his grasp.

Such must be the conclusion which would impress itself upon every sober mind, if the object of the Minister

Minister had been merely to defeat the labours of the Friends of the People; and if those other societies, to whom Mr. Erskine alludes, had been influenced by that honest zeal for obtaining a Parliamentary Reform, through the constitutional interposition of the Legislature, which he asserts. Taking therefore his own positions for granted, the motives which he assigns for the conduct of the Minister are wild and incredible.

But if Mr. Erskine's suggestion is found to differ widely from the fact; if there did exist a set of desperate and flagitious men, whose object was to overturn and confound our customs and our laws; who, in contempt of civil tranquillity and the general happiness, were determined to effect the ruin of the Constitution, by every possible means; was it not the duty of the Executive Government to frustrate their projects?

This question involves the consideration of the expediency of the Royal Proclamation issued 21st May 1792, which is the next public measure that is arraigned by Mr. Erskine. I shall therefore first prove that it was a step called for from the situation of our affairs at home. I shall, in the next place, shew, that it had no necessary connexion with the affairs of France; and that if any did exist in reality, it was created by the machinations and intrigues

of the Government of that country, with the design of producing a revolution here.

Among the persons to whom I allude, as influenced by rebellious views, I do not mean to include those gentlemen who formed themselves into a society, under the invidious name of the Friends of the People. It has seldom happened to any institution to have been so generally and fully condemned as this Association has been. It is not merely the judgment of the friends of Government, and of all who are unconnected with party, that is against them. They were discountenanced by the very head of that opposition to which they cling. The measure was disapproved by Mr. Fox, and he refused to become a member. Many of the most respectable persons who had joined it, withdrew their names soon after its first sitting. But it was reserved for the Club itself to pronounce the final sentence upon its own weakness and inefficiency. It has addressed the Public, to announce the suspension of its functions, as unable to attain the object it proposed. Still I will not dispute that these gentlemen were attached to the principles of our Constitution; but I must insist, that the institution itself was attended with infinite mischief.

It gave encouragement and countenance to the establishment of Societies, whose object went far beyond

beyond theirs. As the Friends of the People professed to accomplish the same Reform which the Revolutionary Societies pretended, their example served to dissipate that alarm at the proceedings of the latter, which the body of the people must otherwise have felt. For some time at least the Nation looked up to them as to the head of these Associations, and conceived that they had a sufficient pledge against desperate designs, in their property, their integrity, and their wisdom. Owing to their having made a common cause with Republicans, the latter were enabled to work more securely under the shelter of their reputation. Mr. Erskine indeed continues to make a common cause between them still. He insists that the views of these Societies were honest though irregular, and calls any dread which was professed of their designs a “contemptible pretext.”

If the proceedings of these Societies had remained secret, yet still a cautious statesman ought to consider all Associations, constituted and influenced as they were, to be an object of well-founded alarm. A set of profligate individuals, destitute of character, and desperate in fortune, associate the young, the inexperienced, and the ignorant, with the avowed design of political innovation. Are we to conclude, in contradiction to all human experience, that the views of such men were directed to the public good? Are we to suppose that men who

have disregarded the social duties of domestic life; who have dissipated their private fortunes in riotry and imprudence; who have spurned at all moral distinctions; and contemned that fair opinion of their neighbours which constitutes the invaluable blessing of character; are at once to render themselves reflecting, grave, and upright statesmen? Upon what grounds can we build the hope that such men are to become thus regenerate in their public capacity? From what preternatural working are we to conclude that the serpent has shaken off at once its poisonous and desperate qualities; or whence is it that we are to be deluded into the belief that it has changed its nature, when it has cast its slough?

Yet such are the men whom we are called upon to consider as being uninfluenced by all the dazzling concomitants of power. We are commanded to believe, that a number of individuals are deeply interested for the public welfare, who have scandalously trifled with their own; that their design is to reform the State, who have proved themselves irreclaimable; that the sole object of these strolling braggart politicians is to respect the general welfare; to cherish universal prosperity; to spread the pure and cheering light of freedom; and in contempt of private gains, to look for their reward in the happiness of their fellow-subjects alone.

Surely

Surely it cannot be uncharitable to suppose that the real views of this description of men were more congenial to the tenor of their lives; that their immediate hope was public confusion; and their ultimate motive, private rapine.

But when we come to examine their proceedings, *part* of which are now before the Public, it seems to result as an irrefragable conclusion, that their only object must have been to overturn the Constitution, and root out Monarchy from amongst us. Their encomiums upon the French Revolution, with all its bloody consequences, were unlimited. Their strictures upon all Monarchical Establishments were outrageous and undistinguishing. Crowned heads, whether vested with limited or arbitrary power, were branded with the common name of Despots. No exception made for the form of Government under which they lived; no saving-clause for Great Britain; but the Constitution misrepresented, vilified, and traduced. French manners, French appellations, and the system of French proceedings, were the idolatrous object of their imitation, and of their public and private applause. Embassies were openly sent to France, with proffers of assistance and schemes of fraternization. In an address which accompanied one of them, the vengeance of Englishmen was denounced against their Sovereign, if he should dare to unite with the Combined Powers who were at war with France!

Is it possible to believe with Mr. Erskine that this conduct originated from “ the honest but irregular zeal of Societies instituted for the Reform of Parliament ? ” If it be so, it is singular that their patriot and peaceable zeal should wear the everlasting uniform of resistance and rebellion. If their design was to obtain a constitutional object by constitutional means, what are we to think of their understandings ? What unheard-of monster must that Reform be, which was to issue from the brains of such blundering declaimers ? — A Reform devised by men who were unable to give a plain and honest exposition of their general views ; who intending to work only a renovation in the Constitution, by an appeal to the Legislature, libel every one of its constituent parts, and give colour to the supposition that they are Revolutionists and Traitors. To view them in such a light would be to view them as Babel-builders, who attempted to raise an edifice that should reach the Heavens, and who were visited with confusion in punishment of their presumption.

But to suppose their zeal to have been so invariably verging towards Democracy, in contradiction to their designs, would be an insult both to their understandings and to ours. It is notorious that their addresses and resolutions, and the very minutes of their sittings, were either devised or corrected by a man, distinguished for his cunning ; for the

the clearness of his conceptions, and the accuracy of his language. It is farther authenticated by their journals, that they were so cautious as to take the advice of Counsel to ascertain how far they might approach with safety towards the verge of Treason.

Yet even these weighty circumstances are the least prominent evidence of their guilt. Their general conduct unequivocally displayed the dispositions of these Societies, and was meant to excite a kindred feeling throughout the country. But they took more decided means to poison the principles of the people, and to promote their final success.— The Rights of Man, a book evidently Republican, the professed object of which was the overthrow of our Constitution, was considered as their Khoran. It was circulated by them with an industry superior to that which any common interest in its dissemination could sustain. No quack has ever demonstrated such ingenuity and perseverance in advertising his deleterious nostrum, as was used by the disciples of Thomas Paine, for the diffusion of his doctrines. Mr. Erskine himself allows that “many “ libels were undoubtedly written by turbulent and “ misguided individuals.” But the observer forgets to remark that these libels were composed by some of the Members of these very Societies; that they were circulated, and recommended, and enforced by resolutions passed at their meetings. As these libels were thus mentioned and adopted by the

Clubs, who can doubt of the poisonous source from whence they sprang, or that the opinions of these Societies were not in concord with those of the authors ?

Neither did their mischievous machinations finish here. Their proselytes were to be increased by affiliated Clubs among the lowest ranks of the community. Men were called upon to promote a Legislative Reform, who, from the habits of their life, could neither comprehend the abuses, or the principles, or the common movements of our Government ; who could not even understand or connect the very system which they were called upon to support, much less to weigh its probable effects upon all those nice and complicated relations which must exist in a civil form of Government. What could such a mischievous mockery of deliberation mean ? What, but that these poor uninformed misguided persons would have been as useful in the camp, as they were insignificant in the council ! —that while thus intoxicated and swelled with blind zeal and fancied information, they were to be crimped into the service of this desperate Condottieri. For this purpose arms were certainly put into their hands, and missionaries traversed the country to feed their enthusiasm and keep them firm to their purpose *.

When

* Mr. Erskine opposes to such manifest proofs that revolutionary designs were entertained by these Societies, the verdict of

When such was the situation of the country, it would have been criminal in the Executive Government to have remained longer passive. The tran-

of three Juries. I entertain all possible respect for the decisions of a Jury, and I will not discuss the propriety of those acquittals to which this gentleman alludes. The proceedings are before the Public, and every man may determine for himself. But it is certainly rather too much for a gentleman of Mr. Erskine's professional experience, to adduce a Verdict of Acquittal as a conclusive proof of innocence. The humanity of our Law leans strongly against a criminal conviction; it regards with severe and scrutinizing jealousy every species of proof which does not bear directly in support of the accusation which is preferred. Both Courts and Juries will hold themselves bound by this rule so firmly, that if the evidence be defective in the smallest step, the prisoner is acquitted, although little doubt can be morally entertained of his guilt. The proof adduced in the late Trials for High Treason was a long chain of circumstantial evidence, which required considerable talents to collect and retain. If the mind of the Jury could not contain and apply this immense body of evidence, they were in the right to acquit. But such weakness or fallibility can only exonerate the accused from the legal consequences of guilt. It happens that Mr. Erskine's inference of positive innocence is less justifiable in the cases to which he alludes than in any other which could be easily adduced. The persons accused might have entertained the design of overturning the Constitution, and yet, as that was not the crime charged in the indictment, they might have been properly acquitted. The Treason specified in the indictment was a design to take away the life of the King; and the evidence adduced to substantiate it, was the attempt to introduce a Republican form of Government in Great Britain. Now it might happen, that although the Jury were satisfied that the proof of the latter was complete, yet they might think that the inference of Treason was by no means just.—Or, in other words, as no positive intention to commit an act of personal

tranquillity of the Empire, the morals and energies of the People, were in danger of annihilation. Even if a Revolution could not be immediately compassed, yet the high and noble spirit which animated the mass of the community was threatened with destruction. It is the sacred love of our Constitution, the inalienable confidence in our Liberties, which has confirmed us a free and powerful people. Proud of this pre-eminence in the form of our Government above the world, we have in truth become superior to the rest of mankind, by the belief that we were so. But remove this elevated notion which animates, consoles, and inspires us ;—let Englishmen cease to make distinctions between the faults of their Governors, and those of their Constitution ;—let them treat the latter with irreverence, and patiently listen to an amplification of its defects ; and the very main stay of our prosperity is loosened and gone.

sonal violence against the Sovereign was proved, the Jury might have conceived that the bare intention to establish a Commonwealth could not be considered as conclusive evidence of a design to murder the King. This point was laboured with considerable eloquence and effect at the trials. A design to establish a Republican form of Government, where criminal intentions against the King's life are negatived, is considered by our laws as nothing more than dangerous Sedition. If the majority of verdicts is to decide the seditious intentions of the leading Members of these Societies, Mr. Erskine would be beaten by a very large majority on the poll.

It

It was to prevent these dreadful consequences, both immediate and remote ; to awaken the People to a sense of their danger; to raise a spirit of loyalty in the Nation, which might counteract such dangerous and anarchical designs, that the Royal Proclamation was issued on the 21st May 1792. I have a very respectable authority to support me in the assertion, that some measure was necessary to tranquillise the agitated mind of England at this period.—It is Mr. Erskine himself.

Mr. Erskine * declares, that “ the avowed object of the Friends of the People “ was to “ bring the very cause that Mr. Pitt had so recently taken the lead in, fairly and respectfully “ before the House of Commons ; in hopes, as “ they declared, *to tranquillise the agitated part of the Public ; to restore affection and respect for the Legislature, so necessary to secure submission to its authority ; and by concentrating the views of all Reformers to the preservation of our invaluable Constitution, to PREVENT THAT FERMENTATION OF POLITICAL OPINION WHICH THE FRENCH REVOLUTION HAD UNDOUBTEDLY GIVEN RISE TO, FROM TAKING A REPUBLICAN DIRECTION IN GREAT BRITAIN.*”

Mr. Erskine then admits that the apprehension lest the fermentation of political opinion might take

a Republican direction in Great Britain, was well founded. Whether this fermentation existed in Societies, or in the Community at large, is immaterial to the present consideration. The mischief was in existence, and *Mr. Erskine* and the Gentlemen who constituted the Society calling themselves *the Friends of the People*, considered it as an evil requiring a remedy. It was for these reasons that their Society was instituted, and the means by which they purposed to affect it, was *a concentration of the views of all Reformers*. If *Mr. Erskine* and his friends thought some measure requisite “to tranquillise the agitated part of the Public,” was the Administration of the Country to regard the danger with the sleepy eye of sluggish indolence?

At a period so evidently dangerous, that gentlemen felt the alarm in their private stations, and rose up to stop the spreading mischief, was the superadded obligation of public duty to render the Cabinet inactive? The one issued a Proclamation; the other instituted a Society.—The measures were different, but the principle and object were the same.—It was a well-founded ALARM of danger to the Constitution, and a laudable exertion to repres it. There is some distinction indeed between the conduct of the Government and that of the Friends of the People in other respects.—The latter were Alarmists in their Society, professing the contrary every where else; but the Administration professed their apprehensions

prehensions in every station where they acted, and in every place in which they were called upon to declare their opinions. The Proclamation was successful in rallying the Nation to defend its Constitution; but the Friends of the People have abandoned their sagacious plan of "concentrating "the views of all Reformers to the preservation "of our invaluable Constitution."

If Ministry had neglected to issue this Proclamation, what other measure remained for a statesman to try? Mr. Erskine admits*, that the "irregularities and excesses of Libellers were for a time overlooked by Government." The experiment, therefore, of suffering these libels to dwindle into oblivion, by a contemptuous disregard of their consequence, had been attempted, and found ineffectual. After such a trial, the Cabinet must either have remained idle at the helm during that period of danger which called forth Mr. Erskine and his friends in an alarm, or they must have advised the Sovereign to appeal to the loyalty and good sense of his People, for their own security, and his immediate protection.

If the issuing of this Proclamation was a measure dictated by sound policy, its wisdom cannot be depreciated because it was issued with the concurrence of

a most respectable part of the Opposition. According to vulgar conception, such approbation from avowed adversaries ought to strengthen our conviction of its propriety. But it is said that their assent was wrung from these gentlemen under the pressure of ill-grounded apprehensions ; that these veteran Statesmen, who had so long acted with Opposition, had been panic struck by Mr. Pitt into a coincidence of opinion ; that he had contrived by a dextrous juggle to disunite the Whig Party, and thus ensured the success of his designs.

Those who are acquainted with the private history of that period, know that it was rather the Minister's wish to unite than to divide the Opposition. Sensible of the importance of unanimity at home during the dangerous and impending crisis, he sought to admit the Leaders of that Party into a share of the Government. A negotiation was set on foot for the purpose ; and it might have been successful, if Cæsar had not deemed it more glorious to pass the Rubicon than to admit of a superior.

The consequent separation of the Duke of Portland, of Earls Spencer, Fitzwilliam, and Mr. Windham, from Mr. Fox, is branded by Mr. Erskine* with the appellation of a "*delusion*," and it

* Page 17.

is pronounced "a blot in the annals of an enlightened age, and of a free country."

If the noble triumph of public zeal over party spirit; if a love to the country predominating over habitual attachments; if a noble wish to save the Constitution, and a sacrifice of private disgusts and long-confirmed prejudices to the attempt, be a delusion, or can appear a blot in the annals of a free country; let this transaction bear the opprobrious censure. But unless the blind and indiscriminate zeal of party has quite overwhelmed the good, old, honest sense of Englishmen, homage must be paid by a grateful Nation to the wisdom, the integrity, and patriot feelings which dictated the measure. Let Mr. Erskine glory to cling to the weather-beaten pieces of the wreck of Party, but let it be the prouder boast of those who left the ruin, that they have saved their country.

Mr. Erskine is as much mistaken with respect to the time, as he is in the motives which gave rise to this disunion. It did not originate with the Minister, or at the period when the Proclamation was devised. It had taken its rise long before, in a radical difference in opinion as to the consequences of the French Revolution. It had even been manifested to the Public a considerable time previous to the date of the Proclamation, which is stated as the first Ministerial step taken to promote the alarm of the Public, and the disunion of the Whig Party.

The first open conflict between the several parts of the Opposition was in the debate of the Canada Bill. The speech and conduct of Mr. Fox on that occasion can never be forgotten. The purport of the Bill was to establish a Civil Government for a dependency of the Empire. It is no unfavourable concession to Mr. Fox, that his sentiments upon the French Revolution had no connexion with the object of the Bill. To bestow such ardent encomiums on that event, during the fermentation of political opinion which it had excited in this country, was at least imprudent. The applause of such a man as Mr. Fox might have inflamed the turbulent and tumultuous spirit already existing in the bosom of Great Britain, and excited the unwary and unthinking to emulate the sanguinary and precipitate conduct of France. But, granting that this was a speculative and improbable result from his speech; there was one more immediate, which the Right Honourable Gentleman could not fail to foresee. He must have perceived that he was about to contradict and hazard a rupture with an old and valued friend; with a gentleman who had delivered sentiments upon the subject widely different from those of Mr. Fox, but with that manliness, ingenuity, eloquence, and overwhelming force, which shewed that his heart, and mind, and conscience went wholly with his opinion. Mr. Burke had published his Thoughts on the French Revolution considerably prior to the debate. If occasion had

had called upon Mr. Fox to contradict the doctrines which were avowed by the book, no complacency to an individual should have compelled his silence. But to travel out of his way, that he might thus publicly contradict a friend to whom he owed so much, was to inflict a bitter wound upon a great and upright mind. It was to offer up as a sacrifice the man with whom he had so long acted, to novel opinions ; to a new, and I will add, a dangerous friendship.

If the Proclamation was a measure required for tranquillising the Country, it is unjust to attribute its origin to sinister views. If it spread the alarm against French principles, it was a necessary measure of defence against their progress. It originated not from a wish to interfere with France, but from the conduct of those who sought to apply her maxims and example to our internal Government.

The Proclamation did not contain a single sentence which alluded to the French Government, or to the internal situation of France *. If we must not make such provision for our domestic safety as

* This is admitted by Mr. Erskine himself, p. 31. although in another place he calls it a "covert Libel by our Ministry upon France," p. 28. and declares that it has "sown the seeds of that War which we have ever since been unfortunately reaping," p. 17.

we may deem expedient, lest it should give umbrage to that country, where is the principle to stop? We dare not hang a French traitor, a French robber, or a French assassin; not even warn British subjects against their pernicious example, lest we should sow the seeds of hostility, by seeming to reproach that nation with the treasons, murders, rapines, and confiscations which have disgraced her Revolution! If this be so, there is indeed no Peace which can degrade us below our present state of humiliation. We are become a Province to this republic, and are no longer an Imperial Kingdom.

But even France herself has been more just to our rights as an independent Nation, than those who have undertaken her defence. If she had “ mildly complained of this act of national police,” as she is supposed in one place by Mr. Erskine to have done*, I should contend, with another admission of Mr. Erskine in my favour, that she would have acted in a manner which “ in strictness she would have had no right to do †.” M. Chauvelin’s Note of June 1792, however, gives no countenance to the supposition of Mr. Erskine. It is an anxious disclaimer on the part of the French Government of any connexion with those Frenchmen who menaced our national tranquillity. It contains a general renunciation of all right to interfere in the

internal concerns of the country, as militating against every principle of justice. It is an exculpation of France, not a complaint against the conduct of Great Britain.

Viewing the whole tenor of the French correspondence, I am persuaded that this Declaration was neither true nor sincere; but although France did not hesitate to act on the principle, she did not dare to avow it.

There is other evidence still more strong than this correspondence, that she has never considered the Proclamation as a legitimate cause of War with this country, nor regarded it as a symptom of hostile designs in our Cabinet. The Manifesto which accompanied the Declaration of War, in February 1793, takes up every other ground of accusation against this country, which is maintained by Mr. Erskine; but it passes by the Proclamation without notice. It supposes our enmity to France and her freedom, to have commenced on the imprisonment of Louis XVI. a period three months subsequent to that in which the Proclamation issued.

It is, I hope, by this time evident that the supposition to which Mr. Erskine refers the real causes of the War is destitute of foundation;—that the Minister could neither feel motive nor necessity for embarking this country in all the dangers incident to hostility, that he might defeat a Motion for

a Parliamentary Reform, or crush such an insignificant Association as the Friends of the People.

It is, I trust, equally clear to every moderate man, that the Proclamation was a measure necessary to preserve this country from internal tumults. That being so, France was not justifiable in regarding it as a measure aggressive on our part, and she has never affected to consider it as such. What private chagrin she may have felt at this proceeding, I shall not stop to inquire. She has never urged that it was a libel on her friendly and pacific views towards this country, although Mr. Erskine has. Still she may have beheld the measure with all the agony of disappointment. It was well calculated to frustrate her predetermined machinations against the British Constitution.

I am prepared to admit that the Proclamation had some share in promoting that alarm against French designs and French principles which was felt, in 1792, by all who were good and wise among us. But I cannot think so meanly of the good sense of England, as not to believe that the feeling derived much greater strength from the virtuous affections of a loyal and noble people judging for themselves upon facts as they arose. That it was the conduct of the seditious at home, and the increasing miseries and crimes of France, which converted that generous sympathy with which we beheld

beheld her first emancipation, into a mingled emotion of horror, disgust, contempt, and anxiety. I will also readily agree that this virtuous and well-founded alarm (for I am not afraid of the word) reconciled this country to the War: but I insist, and will prove, by that correspondence to which Mr. Erskine refers, as containing the grounds and causes of the present hostilities, that the War was provoked by the French. If the War therefore was inevitable on our part, the alarm should have enabled us to prosecute it with spirit, but cannot with justice be said to have produced it.

But it seems that the intentions of our Cabinet must have been hostile, because we refused our mediation between France and the Combined Powers. Mr. Erskine should have assigned reasons for his assertion, or pointed out some authority by which it is supported. Statesmen have in general considered a question of mediation as one of mere expediency. That the Power requested to undertake it was at liberty to accept or refuse the office, from a consideration of her own dignity, her immediate interests, and the probable result of her interference. If these reasons should induce her to decline it, her refusal could neither be considered as a mark of hostility, nor as a departure from the strictest neutrality.

I will not dwell upon the indecency of an application, which called upon Great Britain to me-

diate between France and "*a grand Conspiracy.*" If we had acted upon such a call, we should have decided the question at the very outset *. Those who recollect the posture of affairs at this time, and the public declarations of either party, will be convinced that any mediation unsupported by arms must have proved unavailing. It will not be contended by Opposition that we should have interfered with arms in support of the Combined Powers, since it is the very crime which they impute to Administration. Such an interference in behalf of France would have been to act in direct opposition to the immediate interests of Great Britain. It would have been to coalesce with a great and preponderating nation, her inveterate and necessary enemy, for the subjugation of her own natural and hereditary allies. She would thus at once have overset that Balance of Power which is the prime

* Well might our Ministry reply to this Note, " that His
 " Majesty will never refuse to concur in the preservation or re-
 " establishment of Peace between the other Powers of Europe,
 " by such means as are proper to produce that effect, and are
 " compatible with his dignity, and with the principles which
 " govern his conduct: but the same sentiments which have deter-
 " mined him NOT TO TAKE A PART IN THE INTERNAL
 " AFFAIRS OF FRANCE, ought equally to induce him to re-
 " spect the rights and the independence of other Sovereigns
 " and especially those of the Allies; and His Majesty has
 " thought that in the existing circumstances of the War now
 " begun, the intervention of his counsels, or of his good of-
 " fices, cannot be of use, unless they should be desired by all the
 " parties interested." Official Correspondence, p. 13.

source

source of her prosperity, and which it has cost her so much blood, anxiety, and treasure to maintain.

I am not aware that any call of justice or humanity can require from one nation such a sacrifice of its own interests for the happiness of another. I am sure that neither Brutus, nor Cato, nor Aristides, nor Cleomenes, nor any other Greek or Roman Patriot, to whom it is the fashion to appeal, would have tolerated the dogma. As an Englishman, I deny that any Administration can be justified in the slightest deviation from those ancient principles and maxims upon which our permanent prosperity and safety depend, in order that they may gratify our romantic and momentary feelings.

But let the case be possible : Was the existing situation of France within it ? Were we to abandon that ancient system which had invariably regulated our political conduct in continental affairs ; to disregard those alliances which we had long formed, and which were cemented by a perpetual interchange of benefits ; to form a new and monstrous coalition with France—and this, that we might secure to her the continuance of a State which no wise and honest man could regard without an aching heart ? Were we to offer up this lavish, costly sacrifice, that the French Monarch should be continued in captivity—that the Nobility and Clergy of France should be proscribed, plundered, exiled, or murdered—that

the Christian Religion should be put to silence by the public law, and Atheism openly proclaimed—that the solemn engagement of marriage should be disregarded and trampled under foot—that an union which was to give children to the State, and upon which every domestic virtue and private comfort must depend, should be loosened with as little ceremony as a drunken connexion formed in a brothel *?

Is it for the preservation of these sacred and invaluable blessings that Great Britain is required to have broken her neutrality? Or was it an all-sufficient and all-compensating good that France should be told that she was free—That, amidst the clanking of chains and the dying groans of persecuted wretchedness, her People might listen to rants on Liberty and exhortations to Murder? And this, that a few impious Curés, factious Avocats, ravenous Attorneys, and desperate Adventurers, might have the power of confounding and overturning all divine and human rights!

When Mr. Erskine censures the Cabinet for not having acted in this manner, he adopts the very principles which he reprobates so strongly in the

* Whatever may be the justice of Mr. Burke's sentiments respecting the danger of concluding a Peace with the Regicide upon any terms, his description of the calamitous situation of France is as true as it is eloquent.

Combined

Combined Powers. He recommends it to one Sovereign State to interfere in the civil concerns of another, with the sole view of advantage to the latter*. Such doctrine neither is nor can be approved,

* Lest it should be supposed impossible for a gentleman of Mr. Erskine's talents to advance this doctrine, I will quote his own words:—

“ If instead of inciting and encouraging the Princes of Europe “ to invade France, for the purpose of dissolving her Establish- “ ment, we had become her security against their invasions, “ whilst her Revolution should be confined to her own limits and “ subjects, it is not possible to believe, upon any reasoning from “ human life or experience, that Europe could have now been “ in its present condition. But if, instead of this *passive* and “ *merely preventive* influence, Great Britain, in the true spirit “ and in the full ripeness of civil wisdom, had felt a just and “ generous compassion for the sufferings of the French People; “ if, seeing them thirsting for Liberty, but ignorant of the “ thousand difficulties which attend its establishment, she had “ taken a friendly yet a commanding part; if, not contenting “ herself with a cold acknowledgment of the King of the “ French, by the insidious forms of an Embassy, she had become “ the faithful, but at the same time the cautious Protector of “ the first Revolution; if she had put the rein upon Europe “ to prevent its interference, instead of countenancing the Confe- “ deracy of its Powers against it, the unhappy Louis might now “ have been reigning, according to his oath, over a free Peo- “ ple; the horrors of succeeding Revolutions might have been “ averted, and much of that rival jealousy, the scourge of both “ Nations for so many centuries, might, without affecting the “ happy balances of our mixed Constitution, have been gra- “ dually and happily extinguished.”

“ The Powers that then existed in France, however insincere, “ or however unsettled in their authority, having proffered the “ continuance of Peace, and having asked our mediation with “ the Emperor, upon the renunciation of conquest and ag- “ grandisement,

approved, either by the law of Nature or of Nations. It would overset in its consequences the internal supremacy of every independent State, which is the first axiom of the latter code. Such an interference is undoubtedly allowable, where it becomes necessary for the absolute safety of a State. It is allowable in time of peace, as a measure of pure self-defence, unmixed with any views of inordinate ambition. It is justifiable in time of war, as a means of annoyance to the enemy.

But to interfere with France as she was then divided into parties, would have been to intermingle and league with her private factions. We must have esti-

“ grandisement, and upon the disavowal of interference with
 “ the Governments of other Countries, we should have
 “ taken them at their words. The possible insincerity
 “ of the offer, or the weakness of perhaps an expiring Faction to
 “ give it efficacy, would have only added to the predominancy
 “ of Great Britain. The magnanimous and beneficent conduct
 “ of a powerful Nation possessing a free Government, admitting
 “ the right of another Nation to be free, offering its counte-
 “ nance to *rational Freedom*, lamenting the departure from its
 “ true principles, and demanding only security against its in-
 “ fluence to disturb herself, would have been irresistible in its
 “ effects. Amidst the tyrannies of quick succeeding Factions,
 “ the united force of this Country and her Allies exerted upon
 “ such a sound principle, and thrown into the scale of any Party
 “ in France that might have been willing to preserve the Peace,
 “ would have given to that Party an over-ruling ascendancy.”—
 Mr. Erskine’s Pamphlet, pages 46, 47, and 48.

The earth hath bubbles, as the water has,
 And these are of them.

mated

mated their numbers, their strength, and their principles. We must have interfered with a view to give efficacy to the general will of the Nation, without any means to discover it. The Revolution in 1789 was said to have emanated from that will. The lame and crippled Monarchy of 1791; the Republican Constitution of 1792; the Domination of Robespierre; the Restoration of the Girondists; and the present Constitution, have in their turns predominated in the ephemeral orb of French popularity, and have been successively proclaimed *the will of a great Nation determined to be free.*

What is the result of these reflections? That Great Britain could not have accepted the proffered mediation, unless to her own disgrace, and in opposition to her best interests; that neither policy, humanity, nor the love of freedom could have justified the experiment, which must have been unavailing to France; ineffectual to restore peace to Europe; and which might have precipitated this country into unnecessary war.

The next part of our conduct which Mr. Erskine represents as manifesting a disposition hostile to France, is the recal of our Ambassador upon the imprisonment of the King of France, and of his unfortunate family.

The mere recal of an Ambassador is in itself no ground for hostilities. Every independent State
may

may either send, or recal, or discontinue him, as best suits its convenience, policy, or pleasure. It is the privilege of the Power who sends the Ambassador that it should be entitled to do so, and not of that to which he is sent. If the former chooses to forego the right, the latter is not entitled to complain.

But it may be urged, that although the return of Lord Gower was not a sufficient cause to justify the commencement of hostilities between France and England, yet as the latter had usually kept an Ambassador at Paris, it was a step which manifested her coldness and aversion.

Let it be recollected, however, that the question to be proved by Mr. Erskine is, that this circumstance is decisive of the intention of our Cabinet to force the Country into a War with France, solely on account of the King's imprisonment. Great Britain was neither bound, nor ought she to have paid any compliment to those miscreants who had seized upon the Throne. If deep and sound reasons of policy exist to justify the recal, it was no act of hostility, and it cannot be considered as a wanton insult offered with a design to provoke the War. France therefore could have no ground for the complaint, and it is to be remembered that she did not complain of it.

This

This measure, instead of being hostile to France, and a proof that we wished to engage with her in war, was directly the reverse. It was necessary for the sake of our internal tranquillity; for the sake of France herself; and for the sake of our neutrality.

It was necessary for the tranquillity of Great Britain; because the Republican Faction had derived new spirits from this lamentable event. The turbulent were to be checked; the well-affected consoled; and the wavering confirmed. If such an atrocious circumstance, happening at this juncture, had passed unnoticed by our Government, what must have been the general sensation? Who could blame the People, if they had regarded the imprisonment of their own Monarch with something less than indifference, when he himself, surrounded by his confidential servants, had treated such an event as a trivial and unmomentous occurrence?

But the recal was a measure of tenderness to France herself. She received by it a serious warning from a free and enlightened Government, of the dangers which followed upon her frantic steps. It was the only authorised voice with which Great Britain could endeavour to reclaim her to the blessings of tranquillity and freedom. Neither confederating with her enemies, nor interfering with her councils, nor leaguing with her factions, it was a solemn

solemn appeal to her judgment and her fears. Happy would it have been for that “blood-boulted” Country if she had listened to the prophetic admonition. If, pausing at the remonstrance of a People who had learned subordination at the price of Rebellion, and extracted Freedom from the hazards of a Revolution, she had pondered on the wild havoc which she had made; if she had sought for the cure of her ancient oppressions in more humane and more effectual measures than treasons, massacres, pillages, and perpetual Revolutions.

Yet, cogent as such reasons must have operated towards the recall of our Ambassador, the step was demanded at least as strongly to preserve the Nation from the probability of instant hostilities with France. The massacres of the 10th of August, and those of the ensuing September, proclaimed that neither age, nor sex, nor distinction, could operate as a protection against the indiscriminating bloody rage of an infuriate populace. If the dignity of Great Britain had been violated at that period, in the person of her Ambassador; if his life had become a sacrifice to the jealousy, the caprice, or the appetite for human blood, of a lawless banditti, who ranged the streets, and ransacked the houses of Paris, deaf to the cries of mercy, and unrestrained by the calls of authority; if, like the Spanish Plenipotentiary, he had been covered with insult by the National Assembly itself,

self, for an humble attempt to save the Sovereign of France (the head of his master's House) from the guillotine, War would have been inevitable and instantaneous. And this not a War for any grand object of national interest, but a War to satisfy a point of honour ; a sacrifice of innocent lives to an unprofitable, although an important punctilio.

If these, or any of these reasons operated with the Ministry in the recall of Lord Gower, are they not more than sufficient to authorise the measure ? What right has any man to assign improper motives for a proceeding which can be supported upon others that are more prudent ? Administration has uniformly disavowed any intention to quarrel with France on account of the revolutionary changes in her Government. In every one of those papers which passed between our Cabinet and that of France, it was anxiously stated that this Country neither had intermeddled nor intended to interfere with her internal concerns.

The truth of this assertion was never expressly denied by France. Yet Mr. Erskine and the Opposition bring forward a charge against Ministry, that they commenced the War with the concealed and dangerous design of establishing the ancient Government in that country. An object which France herself has never ventured to assign as the ground of hostilities on the part of England.

It is with a view to establish this conclusion that Mr. Erskine examines that Correspondence which Ministry have given to the Country, as containing the causes of the War—I mean the Correspondence between Lord Grenville and Monsieur Chauvelin. The grounds of the present War, as stated there, are, 1st, the Decree of the 19th of November; 2d, the threatened attack upon Holland, which included the opening of the Scheldt; and 3d, the danger to the Balance of Power in Europe,—a danger founded upon the consideration of the wanton aggressions made by France upon neutral territories; upon her extensive and rapid conquests in the dominions of those Powers with whom she was at War; and upon her ambitious projects of annexing them in perpetuity to her own empire.

According to Mr. Erskine, not one of these grounds can be justly assigned as the cause of the present War.

I shall shortly detail such parts of the Correspondence as relates to each of them; and I shall give the reasons upon which I found a conclusion which is directly in opposition to that which Mr. Erskine has laboured to prove. It is, that these were the real grounds upon which England entered into the War; that it is a War which was first provoked, as well as first declared, by France; that it could

not

not be avoided by this Country by any possible means, without the absolute sacrifice of her own dignity, of the rights of her Allies, and of her immediate safety.

While it was the interest of France to disavow any right of interference by one Nation in the interior concerns of another, M. Chauvelin took care to have the principle notified to our Government *.

So self-evident was this principle conceived to be, and so material to a good understanding between the two Nations, that in the Note which was transmitted to Lord Grenville upon the subject of the Proclamation issued 21st May 1792, M. Chauvelin repeats a part of his declaration of the 12th, and for the second time unequivocally abjures this right †.

Yet,

* " But this very pride, so natural and so just, is a sure pledge to all the Powers from whom she shall have received no provocation, not only of her constantly pacific dispositions, but also of the respect which the French will know how to shew at all times for the laws, the customs, and all the forms of Government of different Nations." — M. Chauvelin's Note, May 12th, 1792. Official Correspondence, p. 2.

Again, in the same Note, p. 3. " For England is free likewise, because she determined to be so; and assuredly she did not suffer other Powers to attempt to compel her to alter the Constitution she had adopted; to lend the smallest assistance to rebellious Subjects: or to pretend to interfere, under any pretence, in her interior disputes."

† His words are: " If certain individuals of this country (Great Britain) have established a Correspondence abroad,

Yet, notwithstanding this professed declaration and protest against all interference of one State with the domestic concerns of another upon any pretence whatever ; notwithstanding the anticipated and acknowledged sense that England felt jealous lest France in her revolutionary zeal should interfere, with a view to disturb her internal tranquillity ; the National Convention pass the Decree of the 19th of November 1792,—a Decree by which they declare their readiness to assist with the whole strength of the French Nation, all people who shall rise against the lawful Government to which they are subject.

Upon a representation of the uneasiness which this Decree afforded to Great Britain, the subjoined Explanation is offered * by the Ambassador of the French.

Unsatisfied

“ tending to excite troubles therein ; and if, as the Proclamation seems to insinuate, certain Frenchmen have come into their views, that is a proceeding wholly foreign to the French Nation, to the Legislative Body, to the King, and to his Ministers ; it is a proceeding of which they are entirely ignorant ; which militates against every principle of justice ; and which, whenever it became known, would be universally condemned in France.”—Official Correspondence, p. 5.

* “ If a real alarm has been occasioned by this Decree, it can have arisen only for want of understanding its true sense. The National Convention never meant that the French Republic should favour insurrections, should espouse the quarrels of a few seditious persons, or, in a word, should endeavour to excite disturbances in any neutral or friendly country whatever : Such an idea would be rejected by all the French. It cannot be imputed to the National Convention without do-

Unsatisfied with such a vague exposition, his Majesty's Ministers renew their remonstrance, and state the particular conduct of France, upon which they justify their having entertained those apprehensions which they express *.

To this remonstrance, M. Le Brun's paper, so often quoted by Mr. Erskine, contains the reply. It neither disavows nor explains the specific charges of confederacy with the seditious of Great Britain, which the British Cabinet assign as the more immediate grounds of alarm at this decree. It contains, indeed, a metaphysical explanation of that law,

“ ing it injustice. This Decree then is applicable only to those people, who, after having acquired their liberty by conquest, may have demanded the fraternity, the assistance of the Republic, by the solemn and unequivocal expression of the general will.”—M. Chauvelin's Note of 27th December 1792. Official Correspondence, p. 16, 17.

* They are thus stated. “ The first is that of the Decree of the National Convention of the 19th of November, in the expressions of which all England saw the formal declaration of a design to extend universally the new principles of Government adopted in France, and to encourage disorder and revolt in all countries, even in those which are neutral. If this interpretation, which you represent as injurious to the Convention, could admit of any doubt, it is but too well justified by the conduct of the Convention itself; and the application of these principles to the King's dominions has been shewn unequivocally by the public reception given to the promoters of sedition in this country, and by the speeches made to them precisely at the time of this Decree, and since, on several occasions.”—Lord Grenville's Letter, Dec. 31, 1792. Official Correspondence, p. 19.

which differs nothing in substance from that which they had formerly given *.

It requires neither eloquence to state, nor ingenuity to draw the just inference from the conduct thus held on the part of France. While it was her interest to disclaim the principle of interference with the internal Government of other Nations, she anxiously disavowed it. But when inflated by victory she has determined to extend her dominions from the Alps to the Rhine, she sets up this very same prin-

* " We have said, and we desire to repeat it, that the Decree of the 19th of November could not have any application, unless to the *single case*, in which the *general will* of a Nation, clearly and unequivocally expressed, should call the French Nation to its assistance and fraternity. *Sedition* can certainly never be construed into the *general will*. These two ideas mutually repel each other, since a *sedition* is not and cannot be any other than the *movement* of a *small number* against the Nation at large; and THIS MOVEMENT WOULD CEASE TO BE SEDITIONOUS, PROVIDED ALL the members of a Society should AT ONCE rise, either to correct the Government, or to change its form *in toto* for any other object.

" Thus, when by this NATURAL interpretation the Decree of the 19th of November is reduced to what it truly implies, it will be found that it announces nothing more than an act of the general will, and that beyond any doubt; and so effectually founded in right, that it was scarce worth the trouble to express it. On this account, the Executive Council thinks that the evidence of this right might perhaps have been dispensed with by the National Convention, and did not deserve to be made the object of a particular Decree. But with the interpretation which PRECEDES it, it cannot give uneasiness to any Nation whatever." — Translation of M. Le Brun's Paper. Official Correspondence, p. 34.

ciple

ciple as essential to secure her success. Sensible that it would be impossible to purchase the neutrality of England until she should execute this ambitious project, France resolved to cut out work which might employ her at home, and thus prevent her interference on the Continent by interrupting her internal tranquillity. With this view, she encouraged sedition here, by every species of artifice which could effect her purpose. All the speeches of her Ministers and of the leading Members of her Legislature, enforced the necessity, and anticipated the impending establishment of a National Convention in Great Britain. With this same design, embassies from the lowest and vilest incendiaries of this Kingdom were received with respect and adulation by the French Government*. A Correspondence was entertained with the disaffected through the intervention of her Ambassador, and a general league and covenant was proclaimed on the part of France, with all Revolutionists and Rebels, by the Decree of the 19th of November. When England complained of this Decree, an explanation is offered wholly unsatisfactory.

* The trials of the Defenders in Ireland establish it beyond doubt, that France had interfered with the internal concerns of this Empire long previous to the rupture between the Countries. It was her object to separate Ireland from Great Britain. With this view, French principles of Government were inculcated by her emissaries among the lowest class of the People, and part of that Oath which they administered to their proselytes was, “*to be true to the French.*” It was at this period that France endeavoured to ensure success to that invasion which she has so recently endeavoured to carry into effect.

It was unsatisfactory both in its form and in its substance.—In its form; as it was the explanation of the Executive Council, who had no authority whatever to make it—for, being the act of the French Legislature, the law could be explained only by those who had the power to pass it. It was unsatisfactory in its substance; because, although it affected to limit the grant of assistance to cases in which it was called for by the solemn unequivocal expression of the general will, yet it reserved to France the right of determining when a Nation had so manifested its will. It recognised the principle, therefore, in its most extended sense. France was to be sole judge of the propriety of her own interference. She might construe a request from the Revolution Society, or a Meeting at Chalk Farm, or from a few British renegades at Paris, into a solemn annunciation of the general will. The extent and magnitude of the People's crime, was publicly proclaimed as the stipulated and ascertained price of her assistance. No other limit was placed to her interposition, but her own opinion, upon that conduct which her interest or convenience required*.

Against

• It is remarkable, that in the very paper in which France affects to renounce the principle, she inadvertently exercises the right. " When every explanation calculated to demonstrate the purity of the intentions of France; when all peaceable and conciliatory measures shall have been exhausted by her; it is evident that all the weight, all the responsibility of the War, will fall sooner or later on those who shall have provoked it. It will, in fact, be nothing but a War of the Administration

Against such an explanation the Cabinet again remonstrated, and urged specific grounds of complaint against the Decree. But they received the very same answer a second time, accompanied with a notable addition, that the Law was a nugacious truism, unnecessarily enacted by the National Convention. Let it be farther recollected, that the Executive Council applied, in the interim between this remonstrance of England and their reply to it, to the Convention for an explanation of this nugacious truism; but the French Legislature refused either to repeal or explain it, and passed to the order of the day.

Such is the general outline of this transaction respecting a Decree, which even Mr. Erskine admits, that "no considerate person can justify *." It is for the good sense of the People of England

" *ministration alone*, against the French Republic; and if this
 " truth could for a moment appear doubtful, IT WOULD NOT,
 " PERHAPS, BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR FRANCE SPEEDILY TO
 " CONVINCE OF THIS *a Nation*, which, in bestowing its con-
 " fidence, has never renounced the exercise of its reason, or
 " its respect for truth and justice." — M. Chauvelin's Note,
 27th December 1792. Official Correspondence, p. 17.

Well might our Cabinet reply, " That England cannot consider such an explanation as satisfactory, but that she must look upon it as a fresh avowal of those dispositions which she sees with so just an uneasiness and jealousy." — Lord Grenville's Letter of 31st December 1792. Official Correspondence, p. 20.

* Page 40.

to determine whether the Rulers of France shewed any disposition in this Negotiation to accommodate the point in difference between the two Countries. I appeal to the same Tribunal, whether it was an affair of such trivial importance, that Ministry should have rested satisfied without an explanation. If it was really a Decree without a meaning, as the Executive Council pretend, ought not France, if her designs were friendly, to have removed at once the uneasiness of Great Britain upon the point? Could it have cost her any sacrifice of time, of trouble, or of honour, if the National Convention had explained or repealed this law? If it was of no importance to France, what are we to think of the amicable dispositions of a country, who could refuse to expunge offensive nonsense from her code, to gratify a Power with whom she is supposed to desire the continuance of Peace? Our Cabinet could entertain no doubt respecting the designs of France, when they contrasted her former eagerness to anticipate our complaints on the score of interference, and her present refusal, when a complaint had been actually made. It was her own judgment upon her own intentions. For, as she held forth her former willingness to explain as demonstrative of her friendly views towards this Country, she must have regarded her present denial as being equally indicative of hostile intentions.

But if the Decree was of importance to the interests of France, it was, on that very account, an object

object of the most anxious jealousy to Great Britain. It could have been of no other importance to France, than to set every Nation at variance with itself; every order of Society in array against each other. To encourage discontent, faction, rebellion, and anarchy through all the neighbouring countries, that she might invade, divide, annex, lay waste, or govern them, just as it suited her pleasure. If Great Britain, therefore, to whom the general interests of Europe never can be a matter of indifference, had regarded a Nation acting upon this principle as she would have done a thief in the night, who kindles up a general conflagration, that he may plunder the confused and distressed victims of his mischief, would she not have proceeded upon principles of the soundest policy? But after having experienced an obstinate refusal to explain the Decree by those who had the power to do it; after having listened to a silly explanation from those who had none; after receiving no answer whatever to the direct charge of facts upon which she founded her opinion that the Decree was peculiarly pointed at herself;—could national honour (if such a feeling continues still known to Britons) —could a sense of her own immediate tranquillity suffer her to continue unprepared for a War, which was rendered inevitable, unless the aggressions of France had been instantly done away.

These reflections arise upon the face of the Correspondence. But when it is added, that pending
the

the very process of Negotiation; at the very time when France was vaunting forth insidious professions of friendship, of respect for other Governments, and of forbearance of all conquest, the Decree of the 15th of December 1792 was passed; is it possible to doubt of the insincerity of her explanation, and the gigantic extent of her ambitious designs?

The speech that prefaced this Decree is declared to be the opinion of the re-united Committees, which included all the leading men in the French Legislature. It was received with the most rapturous approbation by the National Convention, and was followed by a Decree, which was immediately put in execution throughout the conquered countries. They need no comment. I subjoin them in a note. If they do not speak to the good sense and manly spirit of this Country with more impressive force than any eloquence can supply, that hour of national infatuation is arrived, which must overwhelm us in one common destruction*.

The

* M. Cambon, in the name of the re-united Committees, proposed, amidst the loud and universal plaudits of the Assembly, " That the French should establish revolutionary power, " and that they should found the tocsin in all the territories " they entered, declaring that *they would destroy all the ancient constituted authorities, and THAT ALL MANKIND SHOULD BE SANS-CULOTTES.*"

The Assembly decreed,

" 1. *The Generals in all these countries which are or may be occupied by our Armies, shall immediately proclaim, in the name*

The conduct of France with respect to the meditated attack upon Holland, and the opening of the Scheldt, is even more unreasonable and insulting than that which we have already explained.

Upon

“ name of the Republic, the abolition of the ancient Constitutions, “ Nobility, Taxes, Feudal Rights, real and personal servitude, “ the exclusive right of hunting and fishing, and all privileges. “ They shall declare to the People, that they bring them Peace, “ Liberty, and Fraternity.

“ 2. They shall declare, at the same time, that the constituted authorities are suppressed. They shall proclaim the Sovereignty of the People. They shall convoke the Primary Assemblies to elect Judges and provisional Administrators, and shall post up the proclamation of this decree.

“ 3. No one can be admitted into the Primary Assembly, nor be elected a Judge or Administrator, if he has not taken an oath to be faithful to Liberty and Equality; and if he has not renounced all the privileges which he enjoyed. The Members of the existing Administrators and Judicial Powers cannot be nominated in the first election.

“ 4. The National Convention shall appoint Commissioners, chosen from their own body, to go and fraternize with the People.

“ 5. The Executive Council shall also appoint Commissioners for the same end, and to regulate the sum due to the Republic for the expences they have incurred.

“ 6. They shall give an account of their proceedings every 15 days.

“ 7. The French Republic shall keep an account of the expences it has been at, and shall make arrangements for the payment of these expences.

“ 8. THE FRENCH NATION DECLARIES IT WILL CONSIDER AS ENEMIES THOSE PEOPLE WHO, REFUSING LIBERTY, SHALL ENTER INTO ACCOMMODATION OR NEGOTIATION WITH THEIR TYRANTS.

“ 9. The

Upon the 18th of June 1792, M. Chauvelin had promised, in the name of France, that all the Allies of Great Britain (of whom the most intimate was undoubtedly Holland) should be safe from aggression, so long as they observed an impartial neutrality *.

Yet, in a short time afterwards, this upright Government, in whom we are required by Mr. Erskine to place our unbounded confidence, did not scruple to make her promise give way to her ambition; “ she openly violated both the territory “ and the Neutrality of the Republic, (Holland,) “ in going up the Scheldt to attack the citadel of “ Antwerp, notwithstanding the determination of “ the Government not to grant this passage, and “ the formal protest by which they opposed it †.”

“ 9. The French Nation swears never to lay down its arms “ until the Countries which they have entered shall be free, “ and their Liberty secured.”

The 8th branch of this Decree is even more exceptionable than that passed on the 19th of November. The latter professed to pay some respect to the will of the People, but this article expressly enacts, that they shall have no other Government than that which the French chuse to prescribe for them.

* “ He hastens, at the same time, to declare to him, conformably to the desire expressed in that answer, (Lord Grenville’s Note of the 24th May preceding,) that the rights of all the Allies of Great Britain, who shall not have provoked France by hostile measures, shall be by him no less religiously respected.” — Official Correspondence, p. 11.

† Lord Grenville’s Letter, 31st December 1792.—Official Correspondence, p. 20.

Great

Great Britain remonstrates against this aggression. She takes measures unusual to the general forms of her Government, which prove the greatness of her alarm. The Parliament is summoned to meet on the 12th December 1792, although it had been prorogued to February. The King explains to the other branches of the Legislature his apprehensions of the conduct of France. He assigns as the very grounds of his complaints, the same facts which the Cabinet had previously notified to the French Government. He points out the necessity of taking precautions, and of making preparations for defence; and declares these to be his reasons for having called his Parliament so suddenly together. If France, therefore, had wished to avoid a Rupture with Great Britain, she had sufficient reason to see that this Country was determined to enforce her demands. Yet M. Chauvelin, in a Note dated December 27th, 1792, does nothing more than REPEAT, for France, that *promise* which France had so recently *broken*.

The *aggression* itself, namely the opening the Scheldt, is *avowed* and *justified* *.

Great

* " The British Government being thus set at its ease upon
 " these two points, no pretence for the smallest difficulty could
 " remain, except as to the question of the opening of the
 " Scheldt; a question irrevocably decided by reason and by jus-
 " tice; of small importance in itself, and on which THE OPI-
 " NION OF ENGLAND, and PERHAPS OF HOLLAND IT-
 " SELF, IS SUFFICIENTLY KNOWN, to render it difficult,
 " SERIOUSLY,

Great Britain exposed this avowal in a most manly, forcible, and, I will add, pacific and moderate paper*.

A reply is made, which was that transmitted in M. Le Brun's Communication of the 8th of January †, and is in substance the same with that of the preceding December.

There

" SERIOUSLY, to make it the single subject of a war. Should, " however, the British Ministry avail itself of this last motive, " as a cause of declaring War against France, would it not, in " such case, be probable, that its secret intention must have been, " at all events, to bring on a Rupture; and that it made use, " at the present moment, of the vainest of all pretences to colour " an unjust aggression, long ago determined upon?"—M. Chauvelin's Note, 27th Dec. 1792. Official Correspondence, p. 17.

* Lord Grenville's Letter of the 31st December 1792. It is too long to be inserted in such a publication as the present. But it is well worthy of the national attention. As a State Paper it is equally dignified, explicit, and convincing. It is to be found, p. 19 of the Correspondence.

+ " WE REPEAT IT: this question is in itself of little moment. The Ministers of Great Britain conclude that it serves only to prove more clearly, that it was brought forward merely for the purpose of insulting the Allies of England, &c. We shall reply with much less warmth and prejudice, that THIS QUESTION IS ABSOLUTELY INDIFFERENT TO ENGLAND, AND THAT IT IS OF LITTLE IMPORTANCE TO HOLLAND; but that it is extremely important to the Belgians. That it is *indifferent* to England it is not necessary to prove, and its *trivial* importance to Holland is evinced by this fact, that the productions of the Belgians pass equally by the Canals which terminate at Oostend. Its great importance to the Belgians is proved by the numerous advantages the port of Antwerp presents to them, 'Tis therefore on ac- " count

There is no substantial difference between them, unless the reason inserted below is to be accounted such *.

To

“ count of this importance, 'tis to restore to the Belgians the enjoyment of so precious a right, and not to offend any one, that France has declared herself ready to support them in the exercise of so legitimate a right.

“ BUT IS FRANCE AUTHORISED TO BREAK THE STIPULATIONS WHICH ARE OPPOSED TO THE LIBERTY OF THE SCHELDT? If the Rights of Nature, and *those of Nations*, are consulted, not France alone, all the Nations of Europe are authorised to do it—THERE CAN BE NO DOUBT OF IT.”—Official Correspondence, pages 34 and 35.

That is, France had a right to break and annul all the Treaties which Great Britain, the Emperor, and Holland had made with each other since the year 1648. There could be no doubt of it!

* “ If we consult public Law, we shall say that it ought to be nothing; but the application of the principles of the General Rights of Nations to the particular circumstances in which Nations are placed with regard to each other; info-“ much that every particular treaty repugnant to such prin-“ ciples can only be regarded as the work of violence. We “ moreover add, in relation to the Scheldt, that this Treaty “ was concluded without the participation of the Belgians, “ The Emperor, to secure the possession of the Low Coun-“ tries, sacrificed, without scruple, the most inviolable of “ rights. Master of these fine Provinces, he governed them, as “ Europe has seen, with the rod of absolute despotism; re-“ spected only those of their privileges which it imported him “ to preserve, and destroyed or perpetually struggled against “ the rest. France enters into war with the House of Austria, “ expels it from the Low Countries, and calls back to free-“ dom those people whom the Court of Vienna had devoted “ to slavery; their chains are broken; they re-enter into all “ the rights which the House of Austria had taken away from “ them.

To these reasons, which are supposed to justify the infraction of a solemn Treaty, the following offer is added *. It is quoted by Mr. Erskine to evince the moderation of France, and to call down the censure of all wise men upon the insolent conduct of the British Cabinet.

Let us, if possible, repres our indignation at this tissie of flimsy sentiment and audacious mis-statement, and examine it with coolness.

It is asserted that Holland considered this question as of little importance to her. This is advanced

“ them. How can that which they possessed with respect to
 “ the Scheldt be excepted ; particularly when that right is
 “ only of importance to those who are deprived of it.”—
 M. Le Brun’s Paper, Official Correspondence, p. 35.

* “ She (the French Republic) does not wish to impose
 “ laws upon any one, and will not suffer any one to impose
 “ laws upon her. She has renounced, and again renounces
 “ every conquest ; and her occupation of the Low Countries
 “ shall only continue during the War, and the time which may
 “ be necessary to the Belgians to ensure and consolidate their
 “ liberty ; after which they will be independent and happy ;
 “ France will find her recompence in their felicity.

“ When that nation (Belgium) shall be found in the full enjoy-
 “ ment of liberty ; when its general will can lawfully declare
 “ itself without shackles ; THEN, if England and Holland
 “ shall attach some importance to the opening of the Scheldt,
 “ they may put the affair into a direct negotiation with
 “ Belgia. If the Belgians, by any motive whatever, consent to
 “ deprive themselves of the navigation of the Scheldt, France
 “ will not oppose it ; she will know how to respect their inde-
 “ pendence, even in their errors.”—M. Le Brun’s Paper.
 Official Correspondence, pages 35 and 36.

by

by men who could not have forgotten the efforts of the Emperor Joseph to open the Scheldt, in 1784. At that period Holland had scarcely escaped from the effects of her war with Great Britain: yet so far was she from regarding the design as an object of indifference, that she ventured to encounter the whole unbroken force of Austria to oppose it. At that period, also, France did not consider the question as irrevocably decided by reason and justice against the States General; for, notwithstanding the close alliance then subsisting between the Courts of Versailles and Vienna, she interfered to preserve this privilege to the Dutch. She conducted the very negotiation by which the mouth of the River was again closed, in conformity to the Treaty of Westphalia *.

The opinions of the Dutch respecting the importance of the measure may be estimated by the

* It may be said that the conduct of the Monarchy of France cannot be urged to make good a charge of inconsistency against the Republic of France. Those who may resort to such an argument, are not aware of the conclusion which they will establish against themselves. If a change in her form of Government can justify a Nation in altering her conduct towards other independent States, it will justify such States in an interference to prevent it. It would then become a measure of self-defence for every foreign Power to speculate upon the probable result of every domestic innovation in the territories of her neighbours; and to promote or repress it as it seemed most likely to preserve or destroy those Treaties which connected the countries together.

overflowing gratitude with which they repaid the interposition of France. The influence of the latter became unbounded over her councils and her conduct: and the reunion of Holland with Great Britain, although loudly called for by the interests of both, was protracted to a more distant period. Neither was it without good reasons that Holland felt thus deeply interested in claiming the observance of the Treaty of Munster. The opening of the Scheldt would have transferred the whole mart of Germany from Amsterdam to Antwerp. Its uninterrupted navigation would have prepared a broad highway into the very heart of the States General for every power in possession of Austrian Flanders. Holland, therefore, had a right to insist upon retaining this privilege, as one intimately connected with her commercial interests, her internal security, and founded upon the first principles of justice. Upon this last, because it was the industry and embankments of her people which had rendered the river navigable for vessels of considerable burden; and it would have been the ultimate refinement of cruelty to convert her own industry into a means to reduce her prosperity and endanger her safety.

The reasons which induced France to interfere, that she might close the mouth of the Scheldt in 1784, and open it in 1792, are obvious and consistent. It was the same system of national aggrandisement

disement which has been the darling object of the French nation under every change in her Government and councils. In 1784, Brabant was annexed to the Emperor's dominions. In 1792, it was considered as an appanage of France. In the former situation an influence over Holland was to be preferred to the prosperity of a country which belonged to the rival power of Austria. But when France had reduced that fair and fruitful country under her own dominion, (as it must have continued had she even permitted it to exist as a separate Republic, formed under her direction and protected by her power,) her views were varied by the consequent variation of her interests. The increase of wealth, commerce, and population in Belgium, was the increasing prosperity of her own subjects, and the direct augmentation of her immediate power. The opening of the Scheldt led to all this. It secured the attachment of the Flemings; and it commanded an immediate entrance into Holland. By this master-stroke of politics, France would have acquired an absolute dominion over the States General, in the room of such a precarious influence as had been recently destroyed by the interference of Prussia and Great Britain.

If it was of such importance to France, therefore, to establish the free navigation of the Scheldt for her own aggrandisement; and of such momentous consequence to Holland, for the protection

tection of her trade and independence, to prevent; could it be decently said that it was a matter of indifference to England? Or must we be reduced to argue, at this period, that the increasing power of France, and the destruction of Holland, which is our frontier upon the Continent, are matters of no importance to the interests of England?

But were we even to allow that Great Britain had no right to interpose, that she might enforce the Treaty of Munster, as not being directly interested in its preservation; surely, unless the law which is to regulate the conduct of the two Powers is as unequal as that between conqueror and conquered, France had no right to interfere that she might violate it. The grounds upon which she builds her justification are inconsistent with the Law of Nations, and all that has been advanced or written on the subject. If she insists upon a right to annul a Treaty, because she thinks it contrary to the general rights of Nations, she lays claim to the power, and contends for the privilege, to judge and arbitrate upon the validity of every Treaty between independent States.

Unjust and revolting as this claim appears, yet France has contrived to exceed its extravagance in the reasons which she has adduced to support it.

She

She insists upon her right to violate the Treaty of Munster, because it was concluded by a tyrannical (*i. e.* a monarchical) Government; and therefore the people could be no parties to it. The Low Countries being called back to freedom by the victories of the French, she declares that the Treaty is become null, and that the people of course enter into all their rights.

By this justification the French Republic assumes, therefore, *first*, The right to judge of the propriety of all forms of Government, which are established in territories distinct from, and independent of, her own. *Secondly*, To annul all Treaties concluded by such Powers as she is pleased to call tyrannical, howsoever drawn up, or by whomsoever guaranteed. *Thirdly*, To reward the people for their rebellion against such Governments, by a full and plenary indulgence against any obligation to perform them.

Are the people of this country aware of the consequences of such doctrine? Or is it possible that these ambitious madmen could have been aware of it themselves? It goes to shake the peace and tranquillity of Europe to the very centre; to destroy all political good faith; to dissolve all ties and obligations between kingdoms, and acknowledges no other law but that of the strongest. It annuls at once all Treaties in existence, whether entered into with France herself,

previous to her Revolution, with Austria, with Russia, Spain, Sardinia, Italy, Prussia, or Great Britain. It lays in a general claim, on behalf of France, to the exercise of a sovereign and uncontrollable right to intermeddle with the separate concerns of all other Powers. To break through their Treaties and Alliances, according to her own wild opinions of Government, of natural, and of diplomatic law. No matter whether they are in alliance or at enmity, or whether connected or unconnected with her; she has only to declare the article contrary to the rights of Nations, or one of the Governments to be tyrannical, and her right to interfere is pronounced indubitable.

As a proof of moderation, the Executive Council, however, promise, with the most solemn gravity, if we will but wait the return of peace, and until a Republic is established in Flanders, that she will allow the difference to become a matter of negotiation; and THEN,—What is to be the result? Why, if *Belgium* consents to deprive herself of the Navigation of the Scheldt, *France* will not oppose it: “ She will RESPECT HER ERRORS !”

They desire us to forego our present commanding situation; to defer all explanation, until they derive strength from the conquest of their Enemies, and we are weakened by the defeat of our Allies; and then, if Belgium voluntarily yields up what it is evidently for her own interest and that of France

France that she should retain, France will not oppose it!

The THIRD cause of the War, was the total overthrow of the Balance of Power in Europe, by the conduct of the French in the countries which they had conquered. It is rather alluded to than detailed in the Correspondence through which I have attempted to follow Mr. Erskine.

Assuming, for the present, what Opposition has never ventured to deny, that it is of the utmost importance to this country to preserve an equipoise between the first-rate Powers in Europe; can it be alleged that it was not totally destroyed at the close of 1792? Flanders, Avignon, Savoy, Mentz, and all Germany to the Rhine, were in the possession of France. The rights of Holland were infringed, and her territorial safety was threatened by an army which hovered upon her frontier. Neutral territories within the German empire, with which France was at peace, were seized, and their property confiscated. A determination to annex and incorporate with the French dominions, every one of her conquests, was not only manifested, but openly avowed. The Correspondence with our Ministry declares her intention to erect Belgium into a Republic; a measure with which England ought not to have remained satisfied, even if it had been seriously designed.—As such a State would have been too

weak to resist the power of France, it would have been nothing more than a province dependent upon that country, with a separate Legislature.

The Decree of the 15th December, however, went infinitely beyond the Correspondence. It proclaimed the design to REPUBLICIZE all Europe. It abolished all public and private rights. It seized upon all property. It annihilated all established forms of proceeding. It reduced every order in the community to one common rank of wretchedness. It delegated one set of commissioners to levy tributes, under the pretence of regulating the sum due to the Republic for the expences it had incurred. It vomited forth another set to fraternize the people. It was not a mere decree of regulation for past conquests, but of provision for such countries as might be subdued in future. Under these circumstances, need we resort to the subsequent conduct of the French in executing the decree, to explain the intention with which it was passed?

Could Great Britain behold such conduct, and remain quiescent? Was she not called upon to remonstrate; and when remonstrances proved ineffectual, to enforce her complaints by arms?

W^oW Were our Ministry to have given credence to professions of peace and renunciations of aggrandisement, when the proceedings of France were

one

one continued act of hostility and ambition? When we remonstrate against her aggressions, they are justified, and we are insulted with a declaration that we are not serious in our complaint! When we remonstrate again, the justification is renewed! France does not recede a single point from her claims. At the very period, nay, on the very day, when she professes peace and accommodation with England, she promotes, by more decisive measures, that very conduct against which this Country complains!

She laughs in the face of England, with a proposal which glares absurdity; and then braves her by stating: "After so frank a Declaration, which manifests such a sincere desire of Peace, his Britannic Majesty's Ministers ought not to have any doubts with regard to the intentions of France. If her explanations appear insufficient, and if we are still obliged to hear a haughty language; if hostile preparations are continued in the English ports; after having exhausted every means to preserve Peace, we will prepare for War, with a sense of the justice of our cause, and of our efforts to avoid this extremity. We will fight the English, whom we esteem, with regret; but we will fight them without fear*."

War

* M le Brun's Paper, Official Correspondence, page 36.

To this our Ministry replied: "In this form of unofficial communication, I feel that it still may be allowed me to tell you,

War therefore became inevitable, from the moment that this Declaration was made. It was in fact a Declaration of War itself; and if our complaints were well founded, (as Mr. Erskine almost admits they were*,) France, having thus refused to satisfy them, had provoked the War.

" you, without haughtiness, but also without disguise, that
 " these explanations are not judged satisfactory; and that all
 " the reasons which have occasioned our *preparations* still *subsist*.
 " I have already made these reasons known to you by my Letter
 " of the 31st December, in which I have stated, in *precise terms*,
 " what *dispositions* could alone contribute to the *maintenance* of
 " *peace* and good understanding. I do not see that it can be
 " *useful* towards the object of *Conciliation*, to *continue* to *discuss*
 " with you in this form a *few* *separate* *points*, on which I have
 " already made known to you our *sentiments*. If you had any
 " explanations to give me in the same form, embracing *all* the
 " *objects*, which I have mentioned to you in my Letter of the
 " 31st December, and *all* the *circumstances* of the present *crisis*,
 " with respect to England, to its *Allies*, and to the general
 " *system* of Europe, I should still willingly *lend* myself to it.

" I feel, however, that in answer to what you say on the
 " *subject* of our *preparations*, I ought to *inform* you in the
 " *most express terms*, that under the existing *circumstances*, all
 " those *measures* will be *persisted in* here, which shall be *judged*
 " *expedient* for enabling us to *protect* the *security*, the *tranquillity*,
 " and the *rights* of this *Country*, to support those of our
 " *Allies*, and to oppose a *barrier* to views of *ambition* and
 " *aggrandisement* always *dangerous* to the rest of Europe; but
 " which become much more so, when they are *supported* by the
 " propagation of *principles destructive* of all *order* and *society*."—
 Lord Grenville's Letter, 18th January 1793. Official Correspondence, pages 37 and 38.

* Page 40.

Ought

Ought our Cabinet *then*, or ought the People *now*, to be caught like gulls with frothy professions of amity, in opposition to this conduct? Is it to be wondered at, that our remonstrances to France, acting and explaining as she did, should wear the garb of coldness and suspicion? The Administration of this Country must have long seen that France had predetermined on a War with England. The People of England must see it, even if the principal Directors of France and her factions had not severally confessed it;—if we had not received the testimonies of Brissot, of Robespierre, and of Dumourier, differing in every thing else, but agreeing in this, to establish the fact*.

If we contrast her professions with her conduct, those very declarations of friendship upon which Mr. Erskine and the Opposition rest their opinion that England might have remained at Peace, ought rather to have increased than allayed our apprehensions. They could be regarded as nothing more than a syren note to lull us into confidence, and ensure our destruction in the moment of repose. Like the Mauritius bat, the Executive Council strove to increase our somnolence by the gentle flapping of their ominous wings,

* Dumourier, in contemplation of a War with England, proposed to seize Maestricht, which is the key of Holland, in October 1792.—See his own Memoirs.

until

until they drank deep of our blood, even to our death *.

The

• Such is the situation in which Mr. Erskine represents France, as "undoubtedly solicitous for Peace," page 41; which he calls "a posture for amicable and commanding settlement," p. 42; in which he says, "that France was more finned against " than finning," p. 39. He is speaking of this situation of affairs, when he says that we are now asking in vain for Peace, " upon terms, which, without War, were not only within our " reach to obtain, BUT LEFT TO US TO DICTATE," p. 72.

Mr. Erskine recites the substance of His Majesty's Speech, " He states that the King was advised to repeat the same three direct charges against France which had been before made to her Ambassador, and upon the footing of these complaints to call " upon the Country to enable him to augment our forces," p. 43. Yet in the very same page, when speaking of the 15th of December, three days subsequent, he says, "at this time the French Government had done no one act which even Ministers themselves considered as a foundation for War; since War was not " even proposed in the King's Speech; but, on the contrary, " the Correspondence, not disclosed to the House, and which was " going on at this very period, continued to express THE MOST " PACIFIC DISPOSITIONS." Mr. Erskine says, p. 47, that " we should have taken them (*i.e.* the French) at their words, " because the possible insincerity of the offer, or the weakness " of perhaps an expiring faction to give it efficacy, would have " only added to the predominancy of Great Britain." Yet in p. 40 he had said, " neither do I seek to maintain that England " should have rested secure from the explanation of the other " points of difference, as they are explained in this Correspondence; much less that she should have relied upon the " sincerity of them, or the durability of French Councils to " give sincerity its effect." These remarks are wrung from me with reluctance. They are not made for the purpose of exciting

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The labour of refuting Mr. Erskine's positions does not close with the proof that France is the aggressor upon the face of the Correspondence.— Although the causes of complaint which are stated in these papers should be sufficient to justify this Country in the assumption of arms, Mr. Erskine is resolved that they shall not be considered as the grounds upon which Administration embarked in the War. Notwithstanding the admitted neutrality of this Country, until the imprisonment of the unfortunate Louis ; notwithstanding her subsequent conduct, until the whole Continent of Europe had suffered a Revolution, notwithstanding the nature of her remonstrances, and the uniform declarations of her Ministry ; Mr. Erskine is determined to make the Cabinet a party to the Treaty of Pillnitz*, and to prove that Mr. Pitt's object in the War was to crush Liberty in France, and to destroy the germ of a Parliamentary Reform at home. This is the shadowy Æneas, in pursuit of which our Turnus deserts the real toils and field of controversy.

*Talia vociferans, sequitur, strictumque coruscat
Mucronem : nec ferre videt sua gaudia ventos.*

ing an infidious sneer against Mr. Erskine. They are necessary to shew into what inconsistencies and absurdities a gentleman of fine talents may be seduced, when he descends into the situation, and is actuated with the zeal of an Opposition partizan.

* Administration have not merely denied that Great Britain had any participation in the Treaty of Pillnitz, but they have expressly asserted that it was entered into without their knowledge.

Mr.

Mr. Erskine urges in furtherance of this conclusion—that, if our Ministry had not proceeded upon other views than those which are contained in the Correspondence, and which could become the subject of negotiation with France; they would not have refused to receive M. Chauvelin as her Ambassador:—that they must either have attempted to compromise the causes of discontent by amicable arrangement; or, if that was impossible, they must have made them the instant foundations of War.

But, according to our Author, the Cabinet poached, with an hypocritical air, at game which they were afraid openly to pursue. They did nothing which a real wish to accomplish their professed object would have required. They refused to negotiate; inasmuch as Mr. Fox's motion for an Address to His Majesty, “to appoint a Minister to be sent to Paris, to treat with the persons exercising provisionally the functions of Government in France,” was negatived by the House of Commons. They did not instantly declare War, since M. Chauvelin was not dismissed until the murder of the King of France was known in London.

The question, whether it would have been right to accredit M. Chauvelin as the Minister Plenipotentiary of France, was attended with no inconsiderable difficulties. If we had done so, we should

have acknowledged the French Republic at once, and have sanctified the imprisonment of the unhappy Louis with the approbation of Great Britain. Humanity, justice, honour, and a sense of our internal dangers, should have made us pause before we adopted such a measure. The Revolution was so recent, and the commotions of France so violent and momentary, that it was a matter of doubt, whether our acknowledgment of the Provisional Government might not have involved this Country in all the mischiefs of War, instead of preventing it. There was no moral certainty that the messenger who bore from England an acknowledgement of the Republic should find a vestige of its forms in existence; or that a single individual who sustained its functions should remain safe from the unceasing decadence of the guillotine, to peruse the dispatch. Yet, notwithstanding such doubtful circumstances, if this refusal on the part of our Government had proved a direct impediment to Peace; if France had been willing to recede from her aggressions, and this formality had alone obstructed the way to Negotiation; Ministry might have been to blame, unless they had devised some means to remove it.

But, as the recognition of the existing Government of France was a matter of infinite importance to Great Britain, it was not to be wantonly thrown away. France was both willing, and did, in fact, negotiate without such an acknowledgment. She even

even reproached the British Cabinet for their attachment to forms, and considered the credence of her Ambassador as unnecessary to an explanation*. If we are to believe Brissot, it was not the design of Mr. Pitt ultimately to deny the character of an Ambassador to M. Chauvelin.

It is obvious that M. Chauvelin himself did not consider his letters of credence as definitively refused on the 17th of January 1793, at which time a rupture with France seemed inevitable †.

But when the Executive Council and the National Convention displayed designs of the most enormous and dangerous tendency; when they refused to yield the most trifling concession to our energetic complaints; would it have been wise in Ministers to have abandoned the strong ground on which this Country stood, by an unnecessary and inconsiderate acknowledgment of their new Constitution? Ought they to have united France by discouraging the Royalists ‡? Ought they to have offended those

* See M. le Brun's Paper, Official Correspondence, p. 33.

† See his Note, Official Correspondence, p. 39.

‡ I am aware of Mr. Erskine's declamation upon this subject, in reference to the unfortunate expedition to La Vendée. He has chosen to attack that point which is best settled in the Law of Nations, by the invariable practice of Nations, with a string of moral sentiments. If War could be reduced to a system of humanity, his opinions would be as wise as they are merciful; but while the Creator has formed man with his present appetites and

those Allies, in concert with whom England must act, by an unnecessary attack upon the principles in which the former had commenced the War? Ought they to have dissatisfied many wise and able men at home, who conceived the existing Government of France incompatible with the general safety of Europe? Ought they to have encouraged internal sedition, by admitting the lawful

and passions, it is idle to indulge the hope. It is impossible to extinguish the sources of contention, and, of consequence, the melancholy effects of war, which constitute its essence. It is shocking that the innocent should be involved with the guilty, but it is impossible to make a separation.

There never has existed a nation, which has not in some shape interfered with the internal concerns of those countries with which it has been at war, that it might divide their strength, and profit by their imbecility. It was the uniform custom of Athens and Lacedemon in ancient Greece. It was practised by the Romans, in every quarter of the globe. England adopted it in the reign of Elizabeth, in favour of Holland, and of Henry IV. of France; and these examples are cited to us with approbation by the French. During the time of Queen Anne, we exercised it towards Spain, and especially in Catalonia. Spain herself exercised it against France, in the War of the League; and France, in her turn, pursued it against Charles V. in the affairs of Germany, and against England in the times of the Rebellion, as well as in the case of America. It was this principle which dictated the more recent interference of Prussia in the affairs of Holland. Yet this conduct has never formed a subject of complaint. These are the more immediate instances which occur to my memory. But if Mr. Erskine wishes to acquire the rudiments of political science, he may soon render himself master of many more.

inception of such a Government, even before it was enabled to raise its half-formed head from that horrid compost of treason, violence, and blood, in which it had been hatched?

But Mr. Erskine condemns the Cabinet, because it refused to negotiate. With what propriety the charge is made, when the Negotiation is actually before the Public, and quoted by Mr. Erskine himself, it is for the Nation to judge. It is treating the People of England too lightly, to conceive that the mere calling these official documents "a Correspondence between the Secretary of State and the Minister of France," can mislead their opinions as to its nature. If it be not in form and in substance a Negotiation, there is nothing ascertained in the diplomatic science.

It is urged, however, that Ministry could not mean to negotiate, because the House of Commons rejected the motion of Mr. Fox.

Notwithstanding that extravagance of praise with which Mr. Erskine loads the conduct of his leader, I shall not hesitate to affirm, that a more mischievous motion has seldom found its way to the Journals of the House. When it was made, Administration were attempting to effect in London, what Mr. Fox would have compelled the Nation to sue for at Paris. A Negotiation concerning the matter

in

in difference between the two Countries was actually carrying on in a manner and under circumstances more favourable to Great Britain than those which were proposed by Mr. Fox. The recognition of the French Government, upon the consequences of which I have already remarked, was reserved by the Cabinet as the purchase of Peace. It would have been conceded by Opposition as a preliminary unworthy of dispute. To move the House of Commons to intermeddle with a Negotiation upon a man's "*own wise forecast*," instead of a minute acquaintance with such extraordinary facts as can alone warrant the interference, is to violate the first principles of our Government. The Constitution has for wise purposes rendered the Sovereign the sole organ of national communication with other Powers. The prerogative of conducting Negotiations, of concluding Peace, and of declaring War, is placed in his hands. The motives which are to direct his conduct, and the facts on which these motives are formed, are necessarily concealed while the event is in dependence; and this, because they could not be declared to the People, without being also revealed to the Enemy.

When either House of Parliament intermeddles with this prerogative upon idle rumours, or ill-founded conjectures, their motions and addresses are calculated to give a false colour to the measures of Government; to raise the confidence of our

Enemies; and to spread discontent among the People. They anticipate and prejudge the conduct of the Executive Power, without any knowledge of its proceedings, and without giving it an honest means to make its defence. The Servants of the Crown must either submit to a disclosure of circumstances which they are bound to treasure up in silence, or they must conceal them, at the hazard of murmurs at their misconduct, and the risk of losing the confidence of the Country *.

But Mr. Erskine contends, that if our differences with France could not have been composed by Negotiation, War should have been immediately declared. He states this as a conduct "absolutely enjoined by common policy and common sense †." I will admit that Ministry could have entertained but small hopes of Peace after the delivery of the French explanation of 27th December 1792. I

* It is said by Mr. Erskine, p. 45, that "at the time Mr. Fox's motion was made, the Correspondence between Lord Grenville and M. Chauvelin was STILL KEPT BACK from the House of Commons." This, and some other insinuations, ought to have been spared by a gentleman of Mr. Erskine's talents and situation. Those who consult the dates of the letters will perceive that nothing was brought to a conclusion at the time when the motion was made, and not until a month subsequent. It is impossible for Mr. Erskine to be so very ignorant, as not to know that the whole history of Parliament does not furnish an example of the Crown's having laid an unfinished Correspondence before either House of Parliament.

† Page 40.

look upon War to have been unavoidable after the receipt of M. Le Brun's Paper of the 8th of January 1793, which was communicated to our Government on the 13th. But that a Nation should be compelled to declare War upon the very moment when Negotiation terminates, is rather a novel doctrine. It is more a question of policy than of indispensable duty. There certainly did exist reasons which might have dictated this forbearance to Great Britain, and which were neither inconsistent with "common policy, common sense," or common humanity.

The fate of the unhappy Sovereign of France still trembled in the balance. His murder was not finally resolved upon as the necessary cement of the new Republic. A declaration of War from this Country might have inflamed the public mind, and furnished his Accuser-Judges with a pretext to rob him of his life. The situation of Great Britain, and a sense of her own interests, enforced this delay not less cogently than the claims of compassion for a suffering Monarch. The Austrians had not yet recovered from their defeat at Gémappe. An invasion of Holland was threatened by Dumourier, and the force of Great Britain was not in readiness to succour her. The merchants of England were possessed of property in the United States, of immense value. All their foreign bills were payable in Amsterdam. An army was to be raised for the

protection of our Ally, and sent to her assistance. It was also necessary that those British Subjects who were resident in France should have some time allowed, that they might withdraw themselves and their property from plunder, imprisonment, and confiscation. If the French had taken possession of Holland at that time, it would have affected the commercial interests of the Country with the most serious calamities. Hopes of Peace seem also to have been still entertained by our Government; but they were soon destroyed. France declared War against this Country on the 1st of February 1793, in the very midst of a Negotiation between Lord Auckland and Dumourier.

While such reasons existed to justify the procrastination of hostilities, it is surely not a little harsh and unreasonable to refer it to any latent motive which Administration has uniformly disclaimed. It is violence, and not ingenuity, to wrest a measure, which may be thus accounted for, into a proof that the object of the War was the restoration of Monarchy in France.

The Correspondence by which the Negotiation was carried on; the Speeches of the King from his Throne; the Addresses of both Houses of Parliament; the uniform Declarations of His Majesty's Ministers; and the conduct of France herself, contradict the supposition.

Against

Against such direct testimony, no arguments of inference or presumption, however ingenious, ought at any time to have much weight. If the foregoing exposition of the causes of the War and of the conduct of Administration be accurate, those used by Mr. Erskine are certainly inconclusive. The facts upon which he rests his proof are neither inconsistent with the avowed objects of the War, nor necessarily indicative of other designs. I have attempted to shew that the express object of every one of them was either to procure satisfaction from France, or to secure some advantage in the contest which she had rendered inevitable on the part of this Country. If the reasoning be just, that chain of likelihoods upon which Mr. Erskine suspends his assertion is burst in every link. Neither justice, nor candour, nor common sense, permit us to refer the conduct of Ministry to motives which they have anxiously denied, when it can be accounted for more rationally upon such views as they have uniformly professed.

As Great Britain was thus reduced to an alternative, either to undertake the War, or to lay her interests and her honour prostrate at the feet of France, it is laudable to recal the grounds of its commencement to the public recollection. The justice of our cause will administer consolation under defeat, and inspire us with courage to persevere in defiance of accidental calamity.

But if the situation of the Country be such as Mr. Erskine represents ; if the rash designs of the Executive Power have engaged the Nation in all the dreadful responsibilities of War without reasons to justify it ; is this a period at which a lover of his Country would seek to impress that opinion upon the hearts of the People ? Could any real Patriot endure to depress the national energies, when he conceived our situation to be such as the Author describes it,—“ left almost single as we are upon “ the theatre of War; ASKING FOR PEACE, BUT “ ASKING FOR IT IN VAIN, upon terms which “ were not only within our reach to obtain, but “ left to us to dictate—Alking for Peace in France “ under the pressure of a necessity created by our “ own folly * ? ” If England be thus calamitous and prostrate, should the gloom which surrounds her be rendered more frightful by the heavy sense of that misconduct which is past and incurable ? When the continuance of War is inevitable, who is he that can gloat with rapture upon the errors of the Government, and croak his funereal auguries to quail the courage of the Country by a general disparagement of her cause ?

When the victory of Allia had opened the gates of Rome to Brennus and his Gauls, the Senate and the People did not consume their time in con-

* Mr. Erskine's Pamphlet, p. 72.

demnation

demnation of the Fabii! When the slaughter of Cannæ had depopulated her streets, the unyielding spirit of the vanquished scorned to give way to feelings which are alone incident to the coward's defeat! The author of the disgrace was thanked that he had not despaired of his Country! These were a noble People, who had minds worthy of the situation to which they aspired. A season of calamity was not with them a season for reviling and reproach. The commencement of War was a signal for unanimity at home. All parties and all factions subdued their mutual animosities, and united their exertions for the national success.

The minor circumstances which distinguish Nations from each other will fluctuate in the course of centuries; but the great principles of human actions continue unchangeable. The lapse of ages, and the revolutions of science, can make no alteration in the essential characteristics which man has received from the hand of Heaven. The causes which wrought the glory of ancient Rome must ever lead to success in modern Europe. The same emollience of the national mind which has overturned Empires will continue to destroy them. It is not the age, the climate, or the local situation of a Country; it is not the dress or the complexion of its inhabitants which determine the fate of a Nation, or ascertain its elevation in a comparative scale of political importance with surrounding Powers: it is the conduct

duct of its Governors, and the brave or dastardly spirit of its People. Survey the changes of the habitable world to its remotest shores ; scrutinize the prosperity and the decline of Nations through the vast vicissitude of events which diversify the page of history ; they will be found to have proceeded from the converging operation of similar causes. Whether it be Rome or Carthage, France or Great Britain, nothing is changed excepting the name. The prognostics of national prosperity or decline do not vary more than those which indicate a wholesome or a destructive change in the constitution of different individuals. Courage, unanimity, and an honest pride in national pre-eminence, will ensure prosperity and power to every People whom they influence.—Divided Councils, indifference to public honour, and a selfish preference of Peace to every noble but arduous exertion, have plunged all Countries into greater and more immediate distress than the pressure which they endeavoured to avoid.

If a misrepresentation of the causes of the present War could effect nothing more than a change of the Ministry, I should have passed over the artifice with silent indifference. It is the professed object of all party-men to thwart every measure of Administration, that by exciting discontent among the People they may remove their rivals from the National Councils. The propriety of this

this conduct is questionable, even in times of Peace, and when there is a cause for honest dissatisfaction against the persons in power. But when the Nation is at War, it is beyond measure pernicious. The contest is no longer between Mr. Pitt and Mr. Fox; but between England and her Enemies. If the measures of the Minister are discomfited, it is this Nation that suffers, and our Rival who triumphs. If the Country is deluded into a wish for Peace, when she ought to prepare more vigorously for War; if she is plunged into discontent and despondency at the very time when she is called upon to prolong the struggle for her safety and her honour; what change of Ministry can work a recompence for the mischief that is done?

If an honourable Peace is not now within our reach, is this the season for exaggerated representations of the calamities of War, and meretricious pictures of the advantages of Peace *. If a continuance

* The reader will find some curious sentiments upon the propriety of innovation, and the misconduct of the late Parliament, pages 57 to 61. He may learn Mr. Erskine's principles of taxation, and peruse the following prophecy, from p. 61 to 63, that "if the Revenue gets to the point which, *without instant repentance and reformation, is fast approaching*; the Nation, by which I mean the great mass and body of the People, can have no longer any possible interest in the defence or preservation of their Government." He may also smile at an Utopian description of the consequence of Peace, which the author very properly denominates "an animating vision," from p. 65 to 67. These speculations might be excused

continuance of Hostilities is inevitable, or is to be avoided only by consequences more ruinous to the

excused and laughed at over a bottle of wine ; but alas ! when they appear in the shape which is now given them, they are calculated to inflame the People, and mislead them from the true point which they ought to consider. I cannot help quoting the following passage : " I have been shocked in the extreme at " the late ostentatious triumph of the Loan by Subscription. " Very many persons, I am persuaded, have subscribed to it " from real motives of public spirit, and their exertion was a " most seasonable and critical relief to the State ; but, passing " by the condition to which Ministers have reduced their " Country, when public spirit may be really manifested towards " a Government, by a Loan, which would conduct a private " lender to a prison as an usurer ; what must be the reflections " of the middle classes, and the labouring poor of England, " upon the facility of taxation which this sort of patriotism " produces ? The rich lend their money at ten *per cent.* but " the public industry is mortgaged for the payment of the " interest, and every article of consumption is already almost " beyond the reach of the artificer and husbandman ; screwed " up, as they are, in proportion as they happen to come within " the vortex of this accumulating revenue." P. 63. I will not consider whether the labouring poor could have made this reflection, if it had not been thus patriotically pointed out ; neither shall I stop to detail its manifold absurdities. I shall apply myself to assuage Mr. Erskine's feelings upon the subject, and, I trust, that I shall at the same time remove that misconception among the lower classes of the people which the author has unwarily contributed to promote. The poor can have no reason to conclude that the War is supported by the higher classes merely for their own profit. The Subscribers, instead of gaining ten *per cent.* are *losing fifteen per cent.* upon the Loan ; and yet, such are the patriotic motives (wild ones no doubt) which induced them to subscribe, that there have been *fewer forfeitures of original deposits in this Loan, than in the most beneficial Loan which has been made during the War !* Indeed, if I am rightly informed, there is not so much as one defaulter.

Country,

Country, are the people of England more likely to summon up a bold and daring spirit to meet those dangers which encompass them, by being told, " that Peace is the parent of so many blessings, that all Nations ought to run into her embraces with an ardour which no distant or doubtful apprehensions should repel *?"

If there is any one prepossession against the influence of which this Country ought more particularly to guard, it is an over-anxious and immature desire for Peace. Long experience should teach us how often our own impatience on this subject has been turned to our detriment. There is not a single contest in which this Country has been engaged in Europe, since the Restoration, where the advantages gained at the conclusion of Peace have been commensurate with our successes in the War. It is impossible to attribute this effect to any uniform superiority in the arts of negotiation on the side of our Enemies. It is our own want of perseverance, which will not suffer us to reap the fruits of victory. Artful men foment the national impatience at the inevitable calamities of War. The Minister, by whom the contest is commenced, is never suffered to conclude it. It is in this hope that the Opposition encourage the faults of our temperament, to our injury and disgrace. The Country is deceived, and its Enemies

* Page 114.

triumph,

triumph, that a Minister may be displaced, and his Rival seated in power.

During the whole of the present century, the fashionable Patriot-cry has been in accusation of every existing Ministry:—each succeeding Administration have been condemned to endure a temporary displeasure from the People in its turn: but still our prosperity has increased, and History has done justice to those merits which popular clamour had decried. The People of these kingdoms should beware how they consider vehemence and opposition as the test of sincerity or truth. It is no uncommon thing for the same men to pursue the very measures, when scarcely warmed upon the Treasury Bench, against which they had mainly vociferated when out of power: yet their conduct as Ministers was right; and it was better to cover their inconsistency with some flimsy *prétext*, than to persevere in error to the ruin of the Country.

After having thus mis-stated the real causes of the War, at such an unseasonable time, Mr. Erskine proceeds to point out the blindness and obstinacy with which it was pursued. I shall succinctly notice the several proceedings in Parliament to which he refers. They do not need a very serious examination: but I shall investigate, at some length, the steps taken by Mr. Wickham,

in pursuance of his Majesty's command, and the Negotiation of Lord Malmesbury. They will be found to contain the only questions which ought to influence our conduct at the present crisis.

If Ministry were insincere in these attempts to negotiate, it is not a mere removal from office that should satisfy the Nation. Those who could delude the Country on the subject of its dearest interests are unworthy of life. If the terms proposed by our Cabinet are extravagant and ridiculous; if we ought to sit down contented with more humiliating conditions; let those who can endure the thought send a fresh supplication to France, and let his Majesty's Ministers be removed from his Councils. I do not covet that the present Servants of the Crown should act in that disgraceful scene, where England, once so nobly proud, must lick the footstool of the Executive Directory.

I will admit that there are other matters upon which we ought to deliberate, besides the sincerity of Ministers, and the moderation of our propositions for Peace. It may be a question, whether the Country is able to continue the War; or whether it is her interest to support it until she can wrest more moderate conditions from the Enemy. These are very weighty subjects, and are to be handled with the utmost caution and care. The prosperity of the Country, the happiness of all Europe,

Europe, are involved in the consideration. The appeal is to the people of Great Britain. Neither pride, nor resentment, nor impatience, nor fear, should intermingle with a determination which embraces the most important interests of themselves and their posterity.

I shall make little comment upon Mr. Grey's Motion for putting an immediate stop to hostilities within twenty days after War had been proclaimed by the French; it was rather more culpable than that which Mr. Fox had made in the preceding December. The Negotiation between England and France had been submitted to the House previous to the time when this Motion was made. It was no longer a matter of conjecture; but it was reduced to incontestible proof that France had been the aggressor, and had provoked the War. The one Gentleman had merely moved the House of Commons to a rash interference with the duties of the Executive Power, without the possession of a single fact which could justify the interposition; but the other was pleased to attempt the same thing, after facts had demonstrated its impropriety.

Mr. Erskine cites his Majesty's Speech of 21st June 1794, as having "boldly and plainly avowed " the principle on which the War had been begun " and was to be prosecuted, viz. " *To oppose that*

" wild and destructive system of rapine, anarchy, impiety, and irreligion; the effects of which, as they had been manifested in France, furnished a dreadful but useful lesson to the present age and posterity."

The passage is quoted by Mr. Erskine as if it were a transcript from his Majesty's Speech. The world will feel surprised when they are told that it is not to be found there.

The passage, as it stands in the Speech, is as follows *:

" In all your deliberations you will undoubtedly bear in mind the true grounds and origin of the War. AN ATTACK WAS MADE ON US AND OUR ALLIES, founded on principles which tend to destroy all property, to subvert the laws and religion of every civilized nation, and to introduce universally that wild and destructive system of rapine, anarchy, and impiety, the effects of which, as they have already been manifested in France, furnish a dreadful but useful lesson to the present age and to posterity."

The real Speech, therefore, differs both in substance and in letter from the quotation. It does not say that the true grounds of the War were to

* Vide Woodfall's Parliamentary Reports, vol. i. p. 11.

oppose that wild and destructive system, the effects of which had been manifested in France. It by no means asserts, "that the War was to be waged to subdue principles and opinions; to change the Government, and not to punish over acts of insult, or to enforce restitution *;" but it declares *that an attack was made upon us and our Allies, founded on principles of such pernicious tendency.* His Majesty therefore calls upon his People to persevere in the War, as being necessary to defend themselves from aggressions, rendered infinitely more dangerous by the nature of the principles upon which they were committed.

If the printed debates can be relied upon, not one of the Speakers on the side of Opposition considered the Speech as declaring to the House that the grounds of the War had been merely to oppose that system of misrule which prevailed in France. Mr. Fox, who makes the charge against Ministry, does not support it by a quotation from the Royal Speech: he refers to the same passage of Lord Mornington's speech, which is cited by Mr. Erskine; and he adduces it as his authority †, in the same manner as Mr. Erskine condescends with more impropriety to quote it ‡.

* Mr. Erskine's Pamphlet, p. 70.

† Woodfall's Parl. Reports, vol. i. p. 17.

‡ Mr. Erskine's Pamphlet, p. 70 and 71.

Having

Having thus disclosed the fact, I shall not visit it with a single harsh epithet, nor traverse one of the consequences, which the author deduces from his own misconception. I make no doubt that this misquotation has originated from mistake, and not from any wilful design to mislead the Public. But I must stand excused for calling on that Public to remark this lamentable consequence of a zealous and indiscriminate attachment to party. If its influence can so blind an honest and able gentleman, that he will mistake the very words which lie plain in broad print before him, what credit can we give to his statement of facts which are less easy to be ascertained, and where it is of course more difficult to detect misrepresentation? How often must his conclusions prove erroneous, or extravagant, or overpushed, when the very plainest pointed proposition suffers distortion as it passes from his hands?

The substance of Mr. Erskine's charge against the Cabinet, previous to Mr. Wickham's Note, is reducible to this:—That they did not acknowledge the Government of France to be capable of maintaining the accustomed relations of peace and amity with other Countries until the commencement of the Session in October 1795; 2dly, That when they did acknowledge it shortly afterwards, they did not reap the fruits of that measure by an immediate negotiation for Peace.

During the domination of the Brissotines, who were the authors of the War, and during the reign of Terror, as the French emphatically call the tyranny of Robespierre, what confidence could be rationally placed in the professions of this wild and sanguinary Government? Would the Gironde faction have observed that Peace for which they did not seek? Would they have listened to overtures to put an end to a War which they had wantonly provoked? Were we to expect concord and amity and an eternal league with the crew of Robespierre, who had sworn an everlasting hatred to Great Britain? The Jacobins did not wish for Peace with us; it was their dearest object to render War eternal. Death was decreed against any man who should treat of Peace with an Enemy who held a single foot of that territory which was assigned to France by her own constitution. England must therefore have ceded all her conquests in the East and West Indies as a propitiatory present, not that she might obtain Peace, but that she might be permitted to sue for it. What must the terms have been to correspond with this extravagant preliminary? So violent was the Jacobin animosity against this Country, that the usual horrors and cruelties of War were not sufficient to gratify it. By a Decree of the Convention, vengeance, more unrelenting, indiscriminate, and universal, was to be exercised against the British Soldiery, than the most savage Tribes had

had ever practised against each other. No prisoners were to be made; no quarter was to be given to wounded or unfortunate valour; but a War of utter extirpation was announced. Was this a disposition so truly promising, so meek and so pacific, that England ought to have supplicated for Peace, or could have relied on its continuance, if it had been concluded?

Laying aside for the present all consideration of those dangers which must have beset our internal tranquillity, if this measure had been adopted, could any hope exist that Peace was attainable under circumstances like these? The hatred of the Jacobins against this Country was indelible; their jealousy at its power, and their envy of its prosperity, were openly avowed. So far from its being their interest to conclude the War, Mr. Erskine himself contends that the very existence of the Republic depended upon its continuance*.

The

* Page 49.

I am not concerned to vindicate the justice of this reasoning, I only request it may be remarked, that it is the reasoning of Opposition, and that they are confuted upon their own principles. Mr. Erskine pronounces it to be the fact, with all the decisiveness of the modern French style, that “ She (France) “ was rent asunder by the divisions of her own People, but “ cemented again by the *conspiracy of Kings*. ” Might not that wonderful coincidence of opinion, which exists sympathetically between an English Opposition and a French Government, have suggested this sentiment to the latter, as well as to the former? Mr. Erskine shall take his choice of the alterna-

The feeling in which they gloried was eternal animosity to crowned heads. The principle upon which they acted towards Great Britain and her Allies was, that neither Peace nor Treaty, nor the prescribed forms and usages of Nations, should impede the aggrandisement of France, and the general plunder of Europe.

Weigh the characters of Robespierre, Danton, Barrere, d'Herbois, Couthon, or St. Juste, with whom Opposition would have had our Sovereign treat: view their conduct towards each other; and then decide what ought to have been the conduct of Great Britain. That common appetite for prey which keeps savage wolves and bears from falling upon each other; that general law of union which preserves some shew of justice even in the outlaw's den, and awes its desperate inhabitants from inflicting those barbarities upon each other which they associate to practise on mankind; could not influence these monsters. Their animosities, their ambition, their savage delight in perfidy and blood, overleaped even those enormous bounds which

tives which this dilemma presents. If the Jacobins did not originate the notion, and act upon it in the first instance, the People of England have to thank the Opposition for suggesting an argument which must be most cogent with France against the conclusion of Peace. If the Revolutionists were of opinion that War was essential to consolidate the Revolution and to preserve their Government, it is then decisive evidence that they provoked it,

wickedness

wickedness finds it necessary to impose upon itself. Murder lost its relish, unless it was seasoned with treachery. The fall of the guillotine ceased to excite rapture, unless the author of the death gave the signal for execution by a fraternal fawn on his victim.

What Peace with such men could have lasted even during a period necessary for the exchange of those counterparts in which it was contained? Concession would have increased their demands; humility would have rendered them more bloated with insolence. They proclaimed, with an exulting yell, that the National interests of France called for the destruction of this New Carthage, as they impudently termed the United Kingdoms which constitute this Empire. With such political opinions, with such rancorous and deadly animosity to this Country, and without any one principle which could bind the Rulers of France to an observance of the Treaty, what had England to expect from a Peace if concluded? Was she to put off her strength, and to dissolve her alliances, to slumber in tranquillity till this couched tiger should spring forth to destroy her?

Pleasing as the thoughts of Peace must be, does it not become a prudent Government, and a magnanimous People, to consider whether it may not be purchased at too dear a price? Does it not

behave them to estimate the sincerity, the designs, the conduct, and the character of those with whom it is to be made? They who cry out that Peace is to be preferred to every consideration, impose notions upon us which it is impossible they can believe. They wish the People of England to forget their own dignity and absolute safety. But let them beware how they are caught by the lure. Let them guard against this effeminate and womanish longing for what will rivet their chains in the soundness of their slumbers. Never let them forget the councils of that great Roman Orator, whose Country was destroyed because his advice was despised.

“ Sed hoc primum videndum est, cum omnibusne pax esse possit, an sit aliquod bellum inexpiable in quo pactio pacis lex sit servitutis.”

But France sought and preserved the Alliance of America, of Prussia, of Spain, and the Princes of the Empire; and the conclusion is that she would do the same to Great Britain *.

Not one of these instances do in reality controvert the strong arguments which are derived from the avowed principles and character of her Rulers,

* Mr. Erskine's Pamphlet, p. 83. who quotes from two Motions made by Mr. Fox and Mr. Grey.

and

and the instability of her Government. Admitting that France remained faithful to her engagements with these Powers to the full extent for which Opposition contend, it did not spring from any respect for her obligations to them.—It was imposed upon her by the immediate necessities of her own situation.

During the continuance of the War, it was her manifest interest to cultivate a good understanding with every one of those Powers.

It was her interest to do so with America, because, from the annihilation of the French marine, she stood in need of some carriers to convey foreign commodities to her ports. She was the more anxious to maintain it, because the harbours of the United States were absolutely necessary to enable her to preserve her own colonies, and to make any attempts upon our trade in the West Indies.

Independent of the advantage which must arise from a diminution of her enemies, while she continued to contend with the remainder, it was matter of most obvious policy to raise some Power in the German Empire which might weaken the influence of the Emperor. The Rulers of France found an instrument every way suited to their purpose in the King of Prussia. They sought and obtained his alliance, in a sympathy of disposition, principles, and views. The treaties which are thus referred to

were

were not repugnant to the avowed objects of France —to her reducing the dominions, and humbling the power of Austria, while she annihilated the Navy, and destroyed the Commerce of Great Britain. They were made and observed (so far as they were observed) with the direct object and for the express purpose of accomplishing the ruin of these two Powers, whom the Republic properly regarded as her only rivals.

It is something worse than inconclusive argument to resort to Treaties, upon which France rests the main pillars of her aggrandisement, for proofs that she would remain faithful to her engagements with a Nation whom it was her avowed object to combat to extermination.

Let us look to her transactions with Flanders, with Holland, with Genoa, and with Tuscany, to estimate whether France is capable of maintaining the accustomed relations of peace and amity. Has she respected their rights in preference to her own interests? —Have the principles of her conduct been unexceptionably just? —Has her disposition proved uniformly forbearing and pacific towards petty States whom she might insult and trample upon with impunity? Ask the opinion of those Countries, and then let the question be decided, whether the political integrity and good faith of France is such as we ought to confide in?

Let Austrian Flanders look to the professions with which the Republic entered her territories, and compare it with the violation of her Altars, the expulsion of her Clergy, the exile of her Nobles, the confiscation of her Property, and the absolute mortgage of nearly all her Lands to the Creditors of the French Government. Let the Dutch come forward to testify the promises of France to the Republicans of Holland, and the Declaration of the National Convention when the French army passed the Rhine, and then let them say, whether they are not laid in perpetual bonds by the annexation of Maestricht and Venloo to the French Empire? Let Genoa speak of her forced Loans, her insulted Government, and her violated territory. But above all, let the Grand Duke of Tuscany enumerate the consequences and the rewards of his uniform predilection for the amity of France.— His dominions invaded, his powers of Sovereignty outraged, his subjects pillaged, and his principal port forcibly converted into a French garrison, for the purpose of annihilating the Tuscan commerce.

These are the fruits of a Republican League. Yet even with these bitter samples of perfidious violence the Grand Duke might have rested thankful, since any forbearance in a robber is accounted mercy to those whom he has reduced under his power either by circumvention or force. But the capacious measure of contumacy, perfidy, and injustice

justice which was to be poured on the head of a Prince, who deserved the protection of France, if any Prince could deserve it, was not yet full.— General Buonaparte taught him the just value of Regicide tenderness and Jacobin sincerity. He was forced to ransom Leghorn, and purchase the evacuation of his territories, from that Ally to whom he had sacrificed his family regards and his hereditary connexions. But the money had been scarcely told when the French returned to the place, and, not satisfied with re-assuming their wonted possession, compelled the inhabitants of this Neutral State to assist in the equipment of an hostile fleet*.

Those who cite the cases of America, Prussia, and Spain, know full well that these instances afford a strong argument against the very position which they are adduced to support. They are perfectly assured that France has not been faithful in the observance of her Treaties even with these Powers, and that she has furnished strong grounds of complaint to them all. They cannot be ignorant that she rules Spain with a rod of iron ; that she regards her rather as a subjected Sovereignty, existing by sufferance, than as an independent Ally. The remonstrances of the Chancery of Wetzlaer, and the

* So far as the recent accounts from Italy are to be relied on, the treatment of the Venetian Republic is still more outrageous. But I shall not dwell upon them here, as we have not hitherto received an account whether the French Republic have approved or censured this conduct of their Generals.

Prussian Declaration, will inform the People of England how far France respects her compact with Prussia, when it contradicts her appetite for plunder and innovation. The State Papers which passed between Citizen Adet and Mr. Pinckney will unfold the principles upon which she proceeds with respect to America*.

If France cannot refrain from the commission of justice and perfidy even in her conduct towards those States, whose good-will she feels it to be her prime interest to conciliate, what hope can remain for Great Britain whom she regards as her rival? These facts decide the political incapacity of the French Government, although an hundred such politicians as Mr. Erskine had risen to oppose the conclusion. But he has given nothing more than a divided support; and this very measure, against which he exclaims so vehemently in one part of his book †, he has in effect admitted to be a “ matter “ of fair political controversy” in another ‡.

Hitherto the conduct of Administration has been arraigned, because they refused, upon the motion of

* I am aware that some of these instances of the injustice of France have occurred since the establishment of her present Constitution. But this circumstance instead of weakening adds new strength to the argument. For it will not be contended, at least as I should suppose, that France is less capable of maintaining the accustomed relations of Peace and Amity under her present Government than under the Jacobin tyranny.

† Page 79.

‡ Page 40.

Mr.

Mr. Fox, to acknowledge the capacity of the Jacobin Government to treat. They are now to be accused, because they did acknowledge the new French Government, by the Royal Message sent on the 9th of December 1795.

Whether Mr. Pitt differs from the Opposition, or coincides in opinion, it is perfectly the same. He is still subject to their censure, and is equally accused of sinister design.

The sincerity of His Majesty's Ministers in taking this step is impeached by Mr. Erskine, because the Message "only expressed His Majesty's readiness to meet a disposition on the part of his enemies to negotiate*." He remarks †, "Where or how was His Majesty in the nature of things to meet such pacific dispositions, however they might have been entertained on the part of France? The British Government, by the various acts of its Crown and Parliament, (enumerated in the preceding page,) had interposed a positive and public obstacle to Negotiation—it had declared the incapacity of the French Government; an obstacle the most insulting and degrading ever offered by one independent Nation to another; and notwithstanding this declaration of the new state of things in the Message, it is plain that this obstacle still continued. The

* Page 85.

† Ibid.

" Declaration

“ Declaration was a mere *private communication*
 “ of the King of Great Britain to *his own Parliament*: it contained no signification to *France* of
 “ this change of sentiment concerning her Go-
 “ vernment. The existence of a Government was
 “ not even acknowledged. If indeed His Majesty
 “ had accompanied the communication to his own
 “ Parliament with an authoritative Declaration to
 “ the new Government of France, acknowledging
 “ its civil capacity as the Representative of the
 “ French Nation, and expressing a readiness to ne-
 “ gotiate, even in the passive language of the
 “ Message, I should have considered such a pro-
 “ ceeding as a fair motion towards Peace.”

This is the argument which Mr. Erskine displays to public notice as the choice and prime sample of his political magazine.. It is the touchstone by which he covets to have the value of his book ascertained. To use his own words, he desires to stand or fall in the whole of what he has written, as it shall be answered “ by every man whose reason is not disordered, and whose heart is not corrupted *.” A little less zeal might have cautioned this learned Gentleman against the danger of putting his whole argument to issue upon a single point. A little more reflection might have taught him the weakness of that point to which he has so incautiously trusted.

* Page 86.

If this “insulting and degrading obstacle;” as it is called, was interposed by the various acts of the Crown and Parliament, was it not removed by the very same means? Every one of these acts of which the Opposition complain, in behalf of the French Republic, were either direct communications between the Crown and the Parliament, or they were the sentiments of the two Houses, declared in consequence of their deliberations, and recorded in their Journals. They were proceedings of the same nature, and of the same degree of publicity, with that Message to which the objection is made. They must therefore be considered altogether “as a mere private communication of “ the King of Great Britain to his Parliament *,” or as being of a nature sufficiently public for France to notice. Let Mr. Erskine take his choice of the alternatives. If they were private communications which France ought not to have noticed at all, then she has never been insulted.—If they were sufficiently public to demand her attention, then the acknowledgment of the politic capacity of the French Government was as notorious to France as the denial, and the very same means were used to remove the obstacles to Peace which are supposed to have created them.

But Ministers were insincere † in their wishes for Peace, because they made no motion whatso-

* Page 86.

† Page 89.

ever.

ever, either directly or indirectly, towards it, from the 9th of December 1795, when this Message was agitated, to the 8th of March 1796, when Mr. Wickham transmitted the Note to M. Barthélemy.

If the Cabinet had waited for the short space of three months, to feel how the pulse of the new Government in France beat towards Peace, it would not have been easy to arraign their conduct upon the usual notions of policy and good sense. Speaking as a private individual, I must say, that such a degree of caution and forbearance would have been more wise and ultimately more beneficial to the Country, than that precipitate eagerness to negotiate, which the Opposition advised, and which the Minister pursued. But candour obliges me to refute Mr. Erskine's position, although it would rather contribute to the Minister's justification to establish than to controvert it.

The evidence which issues from the fact itself is sufficient not only to contradict the assertion that Ministers took no step for three months subsequent to the Message, but it proves that they could not have delayed to take one even for a single week. Three weeks out of the three months would, I make no doubt, upon more mature deliberation, have been deducted by Mr. Erskine himself; for,

unless some new method of communication has been discovered, it would take so much time to transmit instructions to Mr. Wickham at Bern, and to enable him to deliver his Note to M. Barthelemy at Basle. It should seem to be likewise necessary that the result of the King's communication to his Parliament should be transmitted to the Emperor, that we might at least give our only Ally the choice whether he would negotiate with us, or continue the War alone. The result of the Imperial Councils must also have been received here, before our Cabinet could finally resolve upon their measures, and transmit their instructions to Switzerland. So that taking into our estimate the distance of London, Vienna, and Basle, the nature of the subject, which would require some little consideration, and the unavoidable impediments which couriers experience during the time of War; it cannot be fairly contended that Lord Lansdowne made greater haste to surrender America, or that the Opposition could have exerted greater speed to deliver up Belgium to the Regicide Republic, than Ministers used to expedite their Negotiation with the new French Government.

After such a censure upon the Cabinet for not having taken any steps towards Peace, the next objection is to that step which they took to procure it.

The

The proposition contained in Mr. Wickham's Note to M. Barthelemy is considered by Mr. Erskine* as "the true criterion by which the wisdom and sincerity of Ministers, on the subject of Peace, must be estimated."

His assertions upon this subject are so unqualified as to make us pause, out of respect to his name. His words are †,—“ I utterly deny that the best step, or that any just or rational step was taken by Ministers in Mr. Wickham's propositions towards Peace.—And I assert, that it was impossible that France should not actually entertain that suspicion of our sincerity which the Declaration charges to be affected.”

Mr. Erskine must know, because he has sometimes felt, that opinions so bold and decisive require the support of irrefragable argument. Ill-founded confidence is the certain parent of shame and confusion to all who display it. The world will detect a swaggering assertion when it is unhappily yoked with a paltry proof, although the matter in dispute should be of the most trivial importance that has ever been discussed in Westminster-hall. The good sense of this Country requires something more to convince it than an high flight of words, which vanish from the appre-

hension as soon as they are uttered. But when an Englishman undertakes to justify the acts of the French Government, in opposition to those of his own, something more seems requisite to defend this departure from the common feelings of mankind than cogent reasoning. When he has shaken off the invaluable predilection for what is called our Country, he does not merely degrade England by condemning the conduct of that Executive Power to whom she has committed the management of her intercourse with foreign Nations, but he advances France above her by a contrasted superiority. Arguments of such a tendency must burst like prophetic sounds from the unwilling lips of the agitated speaker.

We claim a right to look for this overbearing strength of demonstration where Nature does not mingle with the argument, but it springs from the rigorous justice of unconquerable conviction.— When under the hands of Mr. Erskine we have something more to hope. It is our fellow-countryman who stands against us. He will approach a subject so sacred to our feelings with trembling reluctance. He will recollect that the honour of the Country is involved in the dispute. Even the Minister shall be spared, lest England should suffer disgrace and humiliation in the eyes of Europe ! Let us see how he keeps forward to this line of conduct which true Patriotism would have marked out for him.

He recurs first to that argument which I have already refuted, that notwithstanding His Majesty's Message, we did not acknowledge the political capacity of the French Government to maintain the accustomed relations of Peace and Amity. But if his reasoning was inconclusive before Mr. Wickham's communication to M. Barthelemy, it is infinitely more weak after the delivery of his Note.

It requires something more than an uncommon share of gravity to state in the face of the Country, that we had not acknowledged the capacity of the French Government to conclude a Peace by this communication, when its immediate object and direct purpose was to propose a Negotiation with France, either by means of a Congress, or in any other way which she might choose to point out. If any measure, therefore, can amount to "an authoritative Declaration to the new Government of France, acknowledging its civil capacity as the Representative of the French Nation *," for which Mr. Erskine so strenuously contends; it is this very measure which the Cabinet pursued, and against which he now inveighs. It was adopted immediately after His Majesty's communication to the two Houses of Parliament. It was a more vigorous step towards Peace than Mr. Erskine declares would have satisfied him. For it did not

* Mr. Erskine, page 86.

merely express "a readiness to negotiate, in the passive language of the Message *," but it was a direct and immediate effort to give practical effect to that acknowledgment which our offer to negotiate conveyed.

But France was justified in her suspicions that we were insincere, because "England was still endeavouring to engage the activity of her Allies in the original cause which had confederated Europe. She continued as before, to subsidize the Emperor, and what is more important, she continued to pay the Army of the Prince of Condé †."

Let the Country thank the Honourable Gentleman for speaking out. If there does exist a medicine of sufficient potency to counteract the general torpor which now creeps upon the Nation; if a draught can be composed, however nauseous, which may possess efficacy to restore our ancient spirit, it is surely now discovered. Such are the arguments with which Opposition woo the Nation to their arms;—such are the principles upon which they profess to govern the Empire.

What! Is it not sufficient that we are to be advised to send an Ambassador to Paris with the

* Mr. Erskine, page 86.

† Ibid. pages 90 and 91.

humblest

humblest apology for not having previously recognised the justice, the temperance, the wisdom, and the stable power of the Regicide?—Is it not enough that we should be counselled to allow France such an influence in our domestic affairs, that we must dismiss His Majesty's Servants for having commenced “a just and necessary War,” with the concurrence of the Legislature, and the approbation of the People?—Are these public humiliations of Great Britain in the eyes of Europe, these dreadful sacrifices to the pride of Opposition and of France, inadequate pledges of our ardor for Peace?—Is all this insufficient to satisfy the ravenous unnatural appetite for British degradation?—Must France be justified in her suspicions of English sincerity, because we have not broken with our Allies, discontinued our warlike preparations, and dismissed our Auxiliaries, as a preliminary to our asking for Peace?—Is the Government to be accused because it would not place the Country, thus bound, stripped, and defenceless, at the feet “of a subtle, “insulted, and enraged Enemy*?” Mr. Erskine will justify France in her charges of perfidy against the Country, because we did not voluntarily forego those means by which an honourable Peace can be alone procured, that we might testify our wishes to attain it. Surely no ruffian clamour from Guildhall or Palace Yard can so drown the voice of

* Mr. Erskine, page 92.

reason that the great body of the People must not see the danger and the ignominy of such counsels.

It is farther contended *, that "there is no man of honour in England who will lay his hand upon his heart and say, that he believes this new French Constitution, this legitimate infant of a month old, was the cause of the King's Message. Nay, further, who will not admit that the growing necessities of the Country, and that the feelings of the People on the subject of the War, did not solely and singly produce it."

"How then," continues Mr. Erskine †, "could we be so weak as to expect that a most subtle, insulted, and enraged Enemy would believe what we do not believe ourselves, and what no man of common sense ever did, or to the end of the world will believe?"

It is rather a new way of arguing, to assert that the French were entitled to question our sincerity in recognising their Government, and in proposing Peace, because no man of common sense can dispute that these measures were required by the necessities of the Country and the wishes of the People. I have not hitherto learned that France

demands, as a preliminary to Negotiation, that our Cabinet should subscribe to the spotless perfection of the new Republican Constitution. She has not yet condescended to propound those terms, upon which she will vouchsafe to give us Peace. But if this be one of them, I will not degrade even Mr. Fox, Mr. Sheridan, or His Grace of Bedford, by the supposition that they are qualified to conclude the Treaty. If England must submit to such a condition, I rather imagine that she will have to form that Cabinet who is to conclude Peace out of those precious remains of the Revolution Society, whom their cowardice has saved from imprisonment or transportation.

But if France is to rest satisfied, as she ought to do, when our Ministers have acknowledged the capacity of her Government to treat, and with our offer to negotiate, she cannot have a more decisive proof of our sincerity, than that our advances are "produced by the growing necessities of the Country, and the feelings of the People on the subject of the War." Were I to grant that Ministers had been insincere, yet France "should have taken them at their words." The situation of the Country would have been a sure pledge that the Cabinet could not dare to retract those offers which it had been compelled

led

led to make, if France had been willing to conclude a Peace.

Ministers, according to Mr. Erskine, were insincere, inasmuch as there was but little difference between the Constitution which had been newly set up and that which had been recently pulled down in France. But this argument is one that France herself was not likely to use. She must have been sensible of the imperfections of her ancient Constitution, or she would not have changed it. She must have thoroughly approved of the new one, or she would not have adopted it. She must have seen a striking "difference between the new order of things and "the old order of things *," for she had publicly proclaimed it. It is therefore a curious consequence to draw, that France must have concluded from the nature of the thing that our Ministry were insincere in their acknowledgment of the Republic, because they seemed to admit a difference which she herself felt, proclaimed, and acted upon. Without entering into a minute discussion of the theoretical distinctions between the old system of Government and the new, it is certain that a very striking difference did exist, which was practically manifested in the conduct of France towards other Nations, and in the general disposition of her inhabitants. It was with these effects alone that our Ministry

* Mr. Erskine, page 92.

had

had any concern as acting for this Country. That such was the fact, Mr. Erskine is himself doomed to confess ; for it fortunately happens, that whenever his assertions are violent and dangerous, he bears his own antidote in some positive contradiction,

Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head.

“ Proceedings now provoke the indignation of
“ the enlightened part of that Nation, which, not
“ long ago, would have been a signal for enthu-
“ siaistic approbation. What was formerly a savage
“ Festival, is now scarcely endured as a political
“ Commemoration ; and we see her public Coun-
“ cils, even in the first transports of their unex-
“ ampled victories, hailing them as the harbingers
“ of universal tranquillity *.”

The arguments which Mr. Erskine has hitherto alleged in justification of the French suspicions were drawn from other sources than the actual Correspondence between Mr. Wickham and M. Barthelemy. Of the proposition itself he facetiously pronounces, that the object was to “ pump” that Minister. The poignancy of the jest must plead its excuse, for it is but ill suited to such a serious subject.

“ Mark now how plain a tale shall put him down.”

* Mr. Erskine, p. 126.

The British Cabinet, not having any immediate means of communication with France, make overtures towards a Negotiation with her Government through the medium of an English Minister who is resident with a Neutral State. The War having extended throughout Europe, they propose a Congress, as the most easy and expeditious way of arranging those terms of Peace in which it was necessary to include the varying interests of so many Powers. But this mode of terminating the miseries of War, although the most usual, as well as the most natural, was not exclusively prescribed to France. England, while she proposed it, was cautious lest she might appear to dictate, and she referred it to the discretion of the Republic, to point out any other form which might better suit with her inclination or her interest. This would seem to be a proceeding as direct, as simple, and as moderate as could possibly be devised.

What is the answer? We are accused, in the most insolent terms, of insincerity, of ignorance of our true interests, and of harbouring a design to protract the War. Our proposition for a Congress is rejected, and no other means of entering upon the work of Peace are proposed. We are, at the same time, censured for not devising some other mode for France, which she herself is either unable to specify, or will not condescend to state; and it is finally declared, as the basis of negotiation, "that

" the

“ the Constitutional Act does not permit the Executive Directory to consent to any alienation of that which, according to the existing laws, constitutes the territories of the Republic.”—“ That it cannot make or listen to any proposition which would be contrary to them.”

What then is the reasoning of Mr. Erskine and the Opposition? England, mild in her language and in her manner, proposes a mode through which Peace is attainable, and she offers to listen to any other which the Executive Directory may suggest. Yet England is to be accounted insincere in her offers for Peace! France is insulting in her language, and extravagant in her declarations. She rejects every thing, and she proposes nothing. Yet the Republic is to be praised as eager for that Peace which Great Britain has offered, and which France has refused!

But the English Cabinet was not in earnest*, because Mr. Wickham states to M. Barthelemy, in his Note, “ that he was not in any manner authorised to enter with him into any Negotiation upon the subject of his Note.” If this be a proof of the Minister’s insincerity, it is rather singular that he should give it an unnecessary place in this Note, when, according to Mr. Erskine, he was

* Mr. Erskine, p. 92.

“ seeking

" seeking for some public justification for continuing the War." There was no occasion for the insertion, unless it was intended, as it really was, to guard against the possibility of misconception.

Ministers had proposed a Negotiation by means of a Congress of Ambassadors from the various Belligerent Powers. As this was the usual method in which Peace had been concluded in Europe when War had raged thus widely, it was natural to believe that it would have been adopted by France, if she had been really solicitous for the restoration of general tranquillity. If she had approved of a Congress, any powers granted to Mr. Wickham to negotiate with M. Barthelemy would have been wholly useless. If she had disapproved, it was left to her to declare the mode in which she might choose to treat. Ought we, therefore, to have gravely appointed a Plenipotentiary to negotiate in Switzerland, when France might elect to negotiate at Paris or at Vienna; or might choose, according to her late proposal, to proceed by couriers, or might refuse to treat altogether?

The true way of estimating the frivolity of the objection is, by considering what the consequences would have been, if France had rejected the proposal of a Congress, but had offered to negotiate

through the medium of an Ambassador. The Executive Government of this Country must have dispatched a Minister Plenipotentiary immediately to Paris upon receiving this proposal. A refusal would have put us as completely in the wrong as we are now in the right. Is it not manifest, therefore, that our having neglected to confer these Powers upon Mr. Wickham could have left us no postern to escape from treating; that our granting them could have answered no useful purpose in furthering a Peace? Yet such is the step upon which the Opposition have been enabled to raise the most violent clamour against the sincerity of Administration.

The last argument from which Mr. Erskine labours to demonstrate the same proposition is, that the answer communicated from the Executive Directory by M. Barthelemy "set up the French Constitution as an absolute bar to the cession of any part of the territory of the Republic; that this pretension being unjustifiable, and the reason of it frivolous and unworthy of a great and enlightened Nation, in its communication with another*."—"We should have kept the Negotiation open†," and not have seized upon such an extravagant refusal as "a new spur to the

* Mr. Erskine, p. 93.

† Ibid.

" vigorous

" vigorous prosecution of the War * ;" and this, forsooth, because it would have been easy to have refuted such ill-founded pretensions. So that the more unreasonable the demands of our Enemy, the greater is the chance of concluding a Peace; and every cuff and kick which she is pleased to bestow upon us, the more sedulous should be our endeavour to cultivate her friendship! I should think that it would be very unsafe to practise upon Mr. Erskine, as an individual, that conduct which he prescribes to his Country. The extravagance and absurdity of an Enemy's demands have been uniformly considered as decisive of her resolution to refuse a Peace.—But it is idle to answer the vain speculation.

The attempt has been made to argue France out of her extravagance by the Embassy of Lord Malmesbury. She prevented all tedious discussion, by a speedy dismissal of our Ambassador; but the extravagance of her terms were increased by the attempt. In her answer to Mr. Wickham, she declared that she would listen to no proposals which were contrary to the laws which bound France. In her last reply to Lord Malmesbury, she declared that she would "listen to no proposals contrary to "the Constitution, to the Laws, and to the Treaties "which bind the Republic †."

* Mr. Erskine, p. 94.

† Official Papers respecting Lord Malmesbury's Negotiation, p. 65.

Let me, however, pursue the painful narrative of British humiliation through all its stages.

Undismayed by such recent ill success, the Ministry resolved to make a new effort to negotiate a Peace with France, in the ensuing September. As the Executive Directory had disapproved of a Congrès; they determined to send an Ambassador to Paris, who should discuss the terms of Peace. For this purpose a *written Note* demanding, in the name of his Britannic Majesty, a passport for a person of confidence, was transmitted to the Executive Directory, through the medium of the Danish Chargé D'Affaires resident in Paris. After waiting three days for an answer to this Communication, M. Koenemann addressed himself to the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, that he might learn the result of his application. This Minister told him, “*in a very dry tone*,” that *he was not permitted to return an answer in writing*, but that he was directed to inform him, by word of mouth, that the Executive Government would neither receive nor answer any confidential overtures transmitted through an intermediate channel from the Enemies of the Republic; but that if they would send persons furnished with full powers, they might, upon the frontiers, demand the passports necessary for proceeding to Paris. This answer was perfectly general; and the Directory would not so much as condescend to notice the application

which had been made by the King of Great Britain in the behalf of his people. Whatever it may please the Opposition to assert, there is at least one disinterested testimony to the insolence of the French Government at this juncture, and to its marked disinclination for Peace. It is that of the Danish Resident, through whose hands these Communications passed. M. Koenemann's letter to the Danish Ambassador contains the following reflection : " I wish, for the sake of humanity, that we " may meet with better success at some future " period; but *I fear that this period is still at a " great distance.*"

But the ardor of the British Cabinet to promote a general Peace, was not to be extinguished by a repulse so supercilious, so forbidding, and so cold. It was resolved to comply even with those unnecessary punctilioes, which France could only have prescribed with a hope to stifle the Negotiation in its birth. Lord Malmesbury demanded a passport upon the French frontier, and was permitted to proceed to Paris. Immediately after his arrival, he presented a short Memorial upon the subject of his Embassy, which did not contain the slightest reflection upon the conduct of France. It was confined solely to a proposal that the principle of mutual cession and restitution should form the basis of Peace. It declares that Great Britain has no restitution to demand, but that she has taken

from

from France Colonies and Establishments of incalculable value. His Britannic Majesty therefore "proposes to negotiate, by offering to make Compensation to France, by proportionable restitutions for those arrangements to which she will be called upon to consent, in order to satisfy the just demands of the King's Allies, and to preserve the Political Balance of Europe*."

To this plain, moderate, and, on our part, disinterested proposal, an answer is returned the most offensive and unreasonable that has perhaps ever appeared in diplomatic history.

It affects to lament that the proposal offers nothing but *dilatory means* to bring the Negotiation to a conclusion. It condemns the conduct of his Britannic Majesty for endeavouring to include his Allies in the Negotiation. It stupidly, as well as falsely, asserts, that the Ambassador's Credentials formally authorised the conclusion of a separate Peace. It insinuates that the Ambassador "had received secret instructions, which would destroy the effect of his ostensible Powers;" and "that the British Government have had a double object in view—to prevent, by a general Proposition, the partial Proposition of other Powers; and to obtain from the people of England the

* Official Papers respecting the Negotiation, p. 23.

" means of continuing the War, by throwing
 " upon the Republic the odium of a delay oc-
 " casioned by themselves." It seems rather to
 reject than admit the principle of Cession and
 Restitution, which was proposed as the basis of
 Negotiation *. It concludes with declaring that
 when Lord Malmesbury shall submit any specific
 Propositions, they will hasten to give an answer to
 them.

In Lord Malmesbury's reply, dated 12th November, he complains of the injurious and offensive insinuations which have been cast upon his Britannic Majesty by this Paper, as tending to throw new obstacles in the way of accommodation. He calmly answers every objection that has been made by the French Government; and with respect to

* I subjoin the Directory's own words, that the Reader may determine for himself :

" The Executive Directory farther observe with regard to
 " the principle of retrocessions advanced by Lord Malmesbury,
 " that such a principle, presented in a vague and isolated
 " manner, cannot serve as the basis of Negotiation; that the
 " first points of consideration are, the common necessity of a
 " just and solid Peace, the political equilibrium which absolute
 " retrocessions might destroy, and then the means which the
 " Belligerent Powers may possess;—the one, to retain con-
 " quests made at a time when it was supported by a great
 " number of Allies now detached from the Coalition; and the
 " other, to recover them, at a time when those who were first
 " its Enemies, have, almost all, become either its Allies, or at
 " least neuter." — Official Papers, p. 27.

the

the principle of the Negotiation, he declares, that
 " the Executive Directory has not explained itself
 " in a precise manner, either as to the acceptance
 " of this principle, or as to the changes or modi-
 " fications which it may desire to be made in it ;
 " nor has it, in short, proposed any other prin-
 " ciple whatever to answer the same end *." In
 consequence of this uncertainty, he " demands a
 " frank and precise explanation upon that head."

No such explanation is given, although it was often required, and several letters were interchanged between the Negotiators †.

At last, however, in consequence of a new request from the Court of London ‡, and the universal murmurs of all France at their conduct, the Executive Directory declare, by a Note, dated the 27th of November, that their former answer contained an acknowledgment of the principle of Compensation, and that they " now make a formal and positive declaration of such acknowledgment." Need any man advance further in the discussion, to be convinced how much the Government of France despise our applications when we

* Official Papers respecting the Negotiation, p. 31.

† Vide No's 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, and 23 of the Papers relative to the Negotiation.

‡ Vide No. 24 of these Papers, p. 41.

sue for Peace ? They resolved to adopt the basis of Negotiation which we had proposed, and yet they refused to satisfy our doubts, or to return an express answer to our solicitation. They insolently reproach us with a design to retard the conclusion of Peace, and yet they consume something more than a fortnight before they will do away an impediment which existed in misconception, and which a single moment might have removed.

Mr. Erskine, however, steps in to the assistance of the Directory. He calls it * "a dispute about nothing;" and asserts, that "the Executive Directory never meant, nor, in common sense, could mean, that mutual Compensation (*the basis of every possible Peace*) should not be the basis of the proposed one."

As he cannot rescue the Executive Directory from the imputation of captiousness, he is resolved that we shall share it with them, by affirming, that this Country might have proceeded to essentials without the explanation we required. The assertion, however, betrays a want of knowledge in the very rudiments of the Law of Nations, which was not to be expected from a Gentleman of talents, who undertook to discuss the terms of Peace. It is a gross mistake to say, that mutual Compensation is

* Page 98.

the basis of every possible Treaty. There is a totally different principle, which is mentioned by every Writer on the Law of Nations: it is called the principle of *Uti possidetis*, and takes place where the Contracting Powers agree to continue in that state in which the fortune of War has left them, without Cession or Restitution on either side.

Mr. Erskine should have recollected that the principle proposed by Lord Malmesbury, admitted of modification as well as change; and that the French might set up a new and unheard-of principle as the basis of Peace. This supposition, which might have been made, was certainly verified by the fact. The Directory have now proposed to us the observance of their Constitution, their Laws, and their Treaties, as the only basis upon which they will negotiate a Peace *.

If other principles, therefore, did exist, upon which the French might choose to negotiate, we were entitled to receive their explicit assent or rejection of that upon which we proposed to found the terms of Peace, before we proceeded to unfold the conditions themselves. We were bound to insist upon it the more, because, from the temper and tone of the Directory's communication,

* Lord Malmesbury's Negotiation, p. 63.

we had reason to believe that every dubious expression was to be interpreted against reconciliation; and that when we had specified our plan, we should be turned round and embarrassed by the rejection of our principle *. Upon the dogged silence of the Directory I need make no further comment. It is sufficient to observe, that neither Mr. Erskine nor the Opposition endeavour to defend it,

This difficulty being at length surmounted, the Ambassador lost no time in delivering two confidential Memorials to the French Minister for Foreign Affairs. The one related to the terms of Peace between Great Britain and her Allies with France, and the other related to Peace between Great Britain, Spain, and Holland, who were the Allies of the Republic.

As the Negotiation is said to have turned upon a single article specified in the first mentioned Me-

* I shall prove that this did happen in fact, notwithstanding the acknowledgment of the principle of Restitution. It is remarkable, however, that in the Directory's acknowledgment of the principle, they change Lord Malmesbury's terms of " Cession and Restitution," into " Compensation." M. De La Croix assigns the reason, in the Conference between him and Lord Malmesbury. They were determined to keep all that they had got; but were willing to recompence the Emperor by assisting him to plunder any one else to an equal amount.

memorial, it will be necessary to allude only to it. His Britannic Majesty demands by it "the restitution to His Majesty the Emperor and King of all his Dominions on the footing of the *status ante bellum* *." He offers as an equivalent an unreserved restitution of all the conquests made from France, in the East and West Indies,

The manner in which it was intended to fill up and modify this general outline is detailed by Lord Malmesbury in his Letter † to Lord Grenville, which contains an account of his conference with M. Delacroix. I shall make only two remarks upon this Letter, in addition to the very high and judicious encomiums which are bestowed upon it by Mr. Erskine, as well as upon its noble Author. The first is, that Lord Malmesbury expressly declares ‡, that he "had it in command to speak and act with freedom and truth," which is a direct answer by the Ambassador to the charge of insincerity which Opposition make against the Cabinet. — The second is, "that knowing the opinion of the Directory, he saw but little prospect of the Negotiation terminating successfully §." The People of England therefore have the judgment of an able man, whose character is unimpeached, and whose opportunity and means for forming his opi-

* Papers relative to the Negotiation, page 45.

† Page 52. ‡ Ibid. § Page 61.

sion were most advantageous, that the Governors of France were wholly averse to a Peace with Great Britain.

In the conference, the restitution of Belgium was made one of the chief topics of discussion. The British Ambassador hinted that France might be permitted to retain a considerable portion of those territories which she had conquered on the left Bank of the Rhine, but declared that the French Minister "must entertain no expectation that His Majesty will relax, or ever consent to see the Netherlands remain a part of France *."

To this it was replied by M. Delacroix, that the success of the Negotiation was to be despaired of, unless France was suffered to keep Belgium and all the territory to the Rhine. But he offered as an equivalent to the Emperor, countries in Germany and Italy of which France was not even in possession; and he proposed for this purpose, without a blush or scruple, to plunder Princes and annihilate Sovereignties with whom the Emperor was in actual Alliance. The object of this conference was to facilitate the progress of the Negotiation. It was meant to enable the French Government to frame their demands with as close

* Page 57:

a reference

a reference to the views of Great Britain and her Allies as the situation and objects of that Country could possibly admit. According to the established forms of Negotiation, from which it is never safe to depart, because they are the only common rule which can govern the proceedings of independant States, the Executive Directory should have communicated their pretensions to Lord Malmesbury, and the several articles of each ought to have become the object of mutual discussion, and (if possible) of reciprocal compromise.

But the Directory could not venture to disclose their extravagant pretensions to England, to Europe, or even to the inhabitants of France, who were at that time clamorous for Peace. To cut the matter short at once, a Note is sent by M. Delacroix, which stated that "the Executive Directory had heard the reading of the official Note signed by Lord Malmesbury, and of two confidential Memorials without signatures, which were annexed to it." It refused to listen to the confidential Notes, (*i. e.* Memorials,) because they were without a signature, and required the British Ambassador, in the following terms, "to give in officially within four-and-twenty hours your Ultimatum, signed by you*."

To remove every ground of captious objection, Lord Malmesbury acquiesces in departing from established diplomatic forms, and again transmits the Memorials, signed with his own hand. He refuses the positive demand of an Ultimatum, as shutting the door against all Negotiation; but he offers "to enter into the discussion of the proposals of his Court, or of ANY counter project which may be delivered to him on the part of the Executive Directory*."

M. Delacroix, in his reply, takes no notice whatever of the two Memorials. But in answer to the Notes of the 17th and 19th of December, which profess the Ambassador's readiness to negotiate, he declares, that "the Executive Directory will listen to no proposals contrary to the Constitution, to the Laws, and to the Treaties which bind the Republic." They command Lord Malmesbury to depart from Paris within eight-and-forty hours. M. Delacroix declares, "in the name of the Executive Directory, that if the British Cabinet is desirous of Peace, the Executive Directory is ready to follow the Negotiations ACCORDING TO THE BASIS LAID DOWN IN THE PRESENT NOTE, by the reciprocal channel of Couriers."

* Page 65.

Grief and indignation swell within my heart when I view the dreadful consequences which impend over the mighty Empires of Great Britain and France from the frantic conduct of these upstart Sovereigns. But it rises much higher when I consider, at the time when no other part is left to this Country but to persevere in the perilous contest, that efforts are made to deceive the People ;—that the grounds upon which the War is continued are misrepresented, and we are deluded with false notions of the possibility of Peace.

According to Mr. Erskine, the object of the Embassy was not to produce a Peace, but to amuse the Country with vain and idle hopes of it, that the terms of the Loan might be more advantageous. This position is not Mr. Erskine's own ; it is borrowed from the deliberations of the Executive Directory. But what the French Government ventured merely to insinuate *, the Author considers as so self-evident that it would be “ an affront “ to the public to maintain it by argument †.” Still, however, he attempts to prove it, and asserts to this end that Lord Malmesbury was instructed to protract the Negotiation by dilatory form, until

* Papers relative to the Negotiation, page 27.

† Mr. Erskine, page 96.

the bargain was concluded for the Loan*. He states likewise, that if it had been otherwise; the Cabinet would have directed the Negotiation to have been resumed at the point where it dropped in the preceding March; that they would have begun with a refutation of the principles upon which the Directory had refused to disannex Belgium from her territory; when, if “ France still persisted in the *“unjust and unfounded pretension*, the business *“could not have lasted a day †.”*

Assuming for a moment that the transaction between Mr. Wickham and M. Barthelemy is stated accurately, let us see whether such conduct would have been consistent with an earnest and sincere desire for Peace.

If we were to conciliate France, would it have been proper to remind her of the extravagance of

* Mr. Erskine, from page 96 to 100.

Mr. Erskine adds another reason for the procrastination.—It is, because “ the unexampled spirit and gallantry of the Archduke Charles changed the face of things, and the season became favourable for Negotiation to lie on its oars.”—Might we not venture to own “ the soft impeachment ?”—Is there a wise Englishman who could blame a measure which did not preclude Negotiation, but which protracted it until the rising successes of this Country and her Allies rendered the conditions of Peace more favourable to us ?

† Mr. Erskine, page 97.

her former pretensions, and the insolence of her former deportment?—If we were in earnest in our wishes for Peace, should we have brought forward in the very front of the Negotiation the main obstacle to its conclusion, before either party had been softened or subdued by concession or argument?—If we were to refute the errors of the Republic, was it not right to obtain from her the admission of some principle upon which the discussion was to proceed?

When Mr. Erskine has decided these questions, it may perhaps be worth his while to examine what resemblance the transaction between Mr. Wickham and M. Barthelemy had to a Negotiation. Mr. Wickham declared that he had no powers to negotiate, and M. Barthelemy, by command from the Executive Directory, rejected the means by which we proposed to effect a Peace. Would Ministers have stood justified to the Country if they had considered a studied insult to Great Britain as a fit basis for a Treaty, or if they had voluntarily sought the discussion of a principle which France might through obstinacy continue to defend, if once brought forward, but which, if kept from her notice, she might drop, as being too absurd for discussion?

But procrastination was the object, because if it had not, the *sine qua non* of the embassy would have been proposed immediately after France had acknowledged

knowledged the principle of compensation. Yet so far were Ministers from doing thus, that "this *single term* was not entrusted to Lord Malmesbury *." He had no answer to give upon the subject to the Note of the Executive Directory, but desired to consult his Court.

This is called † "a strange departure from the ordinary and natural course of Negotiation in the hands of a high and accomplished Ambassador." If Mr. Erskine means to assert by this remark, that Lord Malmesbury was ignorant of the general conditions upon which our Cabinet designed to conclude Peace, he is utterly unacquainted with the fact. The Ambassador was informed of all that Ministry thought and felt upon the subject. But if he means to say, in conformity to the wishes and declarations of the Executive Directory, and to the cant of Opposition newspapers, that our Ambassador ought to have concluded a Treaty without receiving instructions from his Court, it is he who would have his Country to depart "from the ordinary and accustomed course of Negotiation," and who would put her into a situation equally unusual and disadvantageous. I certainly hold the Diplomatic Capacity of Lord Malmesbury in very high estimation. There is no man who understands the particular interests of

* Mr. Erskine, page 99.

† Ibid.

this Country and the general interests of Europe more accurately than he does. I appeal to that Nobleman, whether he would accept the responsibility which his friend would confer upon him?— Whether the final conditions of Peace must not be settled by that Cabinet of Ministers to whom the Crown resorts for advice? These conditions will necessarily vary from the temper, from the demands, and often from the very language of the Enemy. It is impossible, therefore, to declare with precision, at the outset, to an Ambassador, terms, which must depend upon the complexion of the Enemy's overtures. The Ambassador must either have recourse to his own Court for advice, as particular circumstances require, or every thing must be submitted to his individual discretion. It needs little argument to decide that the former method is most advantageous;—for, let the Plenipotentiary be ever so wise and well-informed, the wisdom and information of the Cabinet will by these means be superadded to his. If no Ambassador is to be allowed to communicate by couriers with his Court, every Nation must suffer disadvantage who concludes a Treaty within the territories of its Enemy. There can be no better proof of the position than the instance which has produced the reflection. The Minister Plenipotentiary of France had particular recourse to the Executive Power of the Republic upon every occasion; but Mr. Erskine wishes to deny to the Minister

Plenipotentiary of England a similar privilege, — and why? Because the Negotiation was protracted **TEN** days, while a Messenger might return from London to Paris.

After these objections urged against the design with which the Negotiation was commenced, and the form in which it was pursued, Mr. Erskine proceeds to attack the main points upon which he conceives it to have broken off.

The conclusion of his remarks is*, “The War “ is therefore continued at this moment in conse- “ quence of the *sine qua non* of Great Britain, which “ is Belgium, and not at all upon the reason given “ why that *sine qua non* is resisted.”

“ The British Nation is therefore at this mo- “ ment at War for Belgium †.”

The pointed manner in which these sentences are printed, and the anxiety with which the proposition is repeated, shew that the Author has affixed to it the utmost importance. No doubt he has maturely considered the argument upon which he founds his opinion. He is fully aware of the dangerous consequences of spreading false and ill-founded notions upon such a subject, under the

* Page 107.

† Ibid.

authority

uthority of his name. Although he should stand acquitted, as I acquit him, of all wilful design to injure the Country, yet he must feel all that dreadful responsibility which attaches upon a man who renders us a divided People in the most awful and perilous hour of our danger. If Belgium is not the cause for which War is continued; if there are other demands made by France, to which this Country never can submit without utter ruin; if the avowed intention of that proud Republic is to reduce our importance, to destroy our commerce, to seize upon our Colonies, to annihilate our Navy, to crumble our Constitution with the dust, and to lay waste the fair face of this happy and once high spirited Country; what must his sensations be when he reflects that he has contributed, although it was unwittingly that he contributed, to advance the design?

The point upon which Mr. Erskine relies, is that it appears upon the face of these official Papers, that this Country is at War for Belgium.

To establish this position, he asserts,—1st, That although the restitution of the Netherlands was not made a *sine qua non* of Peace in the Memorial, yet it was expressed as a positive Ultimatum in the collateral discussions with M. Delacroix; and that having been thus proposed as an Ultimatum, it was rejected by France. I should scorn to deny that the

Ministry considered the separation of Belgium from France as a point of the utmost importance. I trust I shall prove that it is so intimately connected with the prosperity and safety of this Country, that we ought to risk every thing to prevent it from continuing a part of the Republic. But the question is, whether, as the Negotiation stood, it was an Ultimatum proposed and insisted upon by this Country; or whether France has not insisted upon terms so unreasonable as to leave us no choice but to continue the War, even though we had agreed to concede this point?

Mr. Erskine confounds the meaning of the terms *sine qua non* and *Ultimatum*, which denote in diplomatic language things totally separate and distinct. A *sine qua non* is a condition put absolutely in the course of a Negotiation, upon which all other conditions and concessions are dependent. It relates only to a single point of the pretensions of the parties while they are under discussion. Though it is insisted upon thus positively, and can never be separated from the other terms which are offered, it may admit of relaxation, of commutation, and even of absolute surrender, by means of a counter-project. But an *Ultimatum* is the last step of the Negotiation. It includes the final determination of the party upon the WHOLE conditions of Peace. It is formed after all the pretensions of the several Powers have been reciprocally communicated and discussed;

discussed ; and if it be not acceded to, the Negotiation is broken off, and hostilities must be renewed. I will admit, that a condition so strongly urged as the restitution of the Netherlands was by Lord Malmesbury, would, in all probability, have been included in an Ultimatum.—But I assert, that our Ambassador was not so absurd as to place the very last act of Negotiation foremost ;—that neither he nor the Executive Directory considered an explanatory conference between the two Plenipotentiaries as containing an Ultimatum. It was left open to the French Government to propose, and the Ambassador offered to discuss any counter project which they might choose to deliver. In that counter-project France might have made the consolidation of the Netherlands with her Empire a leading article. But she neither did nor wished to consider the restitution of Belgium distinct from the remainder of our proposals for Peace. She demanded our Ultimatum upon all the terms which are specified in our Memorials. She refused to deliver in any counter-terms of her own, and, departing from that principle of restitution which she had affected to admit as a preliminary, she declared for a new basis of Negotiation, to which this Country could never accede.

Let us examine, however, the solidity of the arguments upon which Mr. Erskine rests this

opinion. He says *, that the Executive Directory having learned the substance of Lord Malmesbury's conference with M. Delacroix, considered the retrocession of Belgium to be insisted upon as an Ultimatum by him. When they required the Ambassador, therefore, to give in his Ultimatum in writing in twenty-four hours, " it had undoubtedly a pointed reference to Belgium, and cannot be considered as a requisition of an Ultimatum upon every collateral point of the Negotiation."

If the Directory had understood the conference as offering to convey an Ultimatum on the part of England, they would have forced a meaning from Lord Malmesbury's expressions which they were never intended to convey, because I have already shewn that a *sine qua non*, in the language of diplomacy, never can signify an *Ultimatum*. They would have acted also in contradiction to every principle of Negotiation ; for, instead of considering the conditions proposed by His Britannic Majesty all together, and weighing and balancing them against each other, they would have forcibly separated that which respected Belgium from the remainder, and demanded an Ultimatum as to it, without even discussing the other points which are

* Page 102.

mentioned

mentioned in the Memorials. But it is most evident from the Note itself, that the Directory could intend no such thing. If Mr. Erskine's interpretation be just, the Directory did not mean to require an Ultimatum, for they had already received one; but they desired that the Ultimatum which had been delivered at the conference should be formally reduced into writing. If their meaning was such, it is a little singular that they should make the request only by that inference which results from desiring the Ambassador to sign it*. It is more wonderful that they should do so at a time when they were so minutely particular in their requisition that he should sign all his communications. But what is most decisive is, that this Ultimatum, if given in at all, was propounded in the conference with M. Delacroix.—Yet the Note in which the demand is made, mentions nothing of the conference at all, but professes to be written after having heard the reading of Lord Malmesbury's Note, and the two confidential Memorials†, which contained the entire propositions of

Peace

* The words used by M. Delacroix are,—“ I am charged expressly by the Directory to declare to you, that it cannot listen to any confidential Note without a signature, and to require of you to give in to me, officially, within four-and-twenty hours, your *Ultimatum*, signed by you.”—Official Papers, page 63.

† The words are,—“ The Executive Directory has heard the reading of the official Note, signed by you, and of two

Peace between England and France, and their respective Allies. It declares, that the Directory would pay no attention to either, because they were not signed, and requires our Minister to give in the Ultimatum upon which this Country will conclude Peace, as the very first step of the Negotiation. To adopt Mr. Erskine's construction, therefore, we must not only admit that the Directory have made no reference to the principal transaction upon which the subject of their Note is founded; but that they mean to exclude its application to the very papers upon which they declare that they have made the demand. We must likewise suppose them to signify this meaning by the demand of an Ultimatum, when that word, in its usual sense, applies to all the articles that are proposed as the conditions of Peace.

Mr. Erskine is not contented with arguing that the Executive Directory considered this demand of an Ultimatum as referring only to Belgium. He makes Lord Malmesbury himself of a similar opinion.—“ For his Lordship, referring to his official “ Note, and also to his verbal declarations to M. “ Delacroix, *connecting them properly together*, “ expresses himself thus: *He therefore can add*

“ confidential Memorials without signatures, which were annexed to it, and which you gave in to me yesterday.”—
Official Papers, page 63.

“ *nothing*

" nothing to the assurances which he has already given to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, as well by word of mouth as in his official Note*."

This suggestion is wholly irreconcileable with every part of the Ambassador's Note. Instead of supposing that he has already given in an Ultimatum, he expressly declines to do so. He assigns reasons to justify the refusal, which are alone reconcileable with this supposition. He makes no distinction between the article which relates to Belgium and that which relates to Holland, or any other of the Allies. He requires in general to hear the pretensions of France, and declares, that to demand an Ultimatum before the *articles* of the future Treaty have been discussed, is to shut the door against all Negotiation †. These arguments would be totally inapplicable if Lord Malmesbury conceived that he had already delivered his Ultimatum, and was only required formally to reduce it into writing. He could not with propriety require that the pretensions of France should be communicated to him, that he might be enabled to frame an Ultimatum, when he had already delivered one. It would have been indecent to demand the discussion of a point upon which he had informed the Directory that no alteration would be allowed; and

* Mr. Erskine, page 102.

† Official Papers, page 65.

he had no right to complain that the door was shut against Negotiation, when he had closed it with his own hands *. Neither will the half sentence which is quoted by Mr. Erskine, if it is to be regarded as common English, bear the meaning which he gives it.—The word “assurances” signifies promises, and not the terms of a treaty. When it is coupled with the remainder of the sentence, from which it was never intended to be disjoined, it has that signification. His Lordship, instead of saying with Mr. Erskine, that he has no other terms to propose than such as he had submitted to the French Minister, partly in writing and partly by word of mouth, simply declares that he can add nothing to those promises which he has already made to him; and therefore repeats them, by stating that he is ready to enter into every necessary explanation, with candour and a spirit of conciliation,

* Mr. Erskine insists that the offer to discuss a counter project did not keep the Negotiation open, because it was coupled with a condition “ that it must still be kept in view that the Netherlands must not become French, nor likely again to fall into the hands of France.” P. 101. But by an unfortunate mistake, he has quoted from the conference with M. Delacroix, instead of quoting from Lord Malmesbury’s last Note, which makes the offer in the most unqualified manner. I make no doubt that this has originated from mistake; but I must again caution the world against the pernicious influence of party zeal, which can mislead so grossly a man of talents, who is accustomed, by the course of his life, to the most patient and accurate investigation.

If

If this reasoning be well founded, it cannot be true that the Executive Directory, in their reply to this last Note, meant only to advance an Ultimatum against an Ultimatum upon a particular point. It is indeed impossible not to consider it as an answer to the whole of our propositions for Peace. They use the word *proposals*, which must apply to more than the *single* article respecting *Belgium*. It was not pretended that the restitution of these provinces would have violated either the Laws or the Treaties which bind the Republic, or any thing but the Constitution. It could have served no purpose, therefore, except that of vexatiousness, to have inserted them, if it was meant to confine the restriction to the Netherlands alone. But what puts this matter beyond question is, that the Executive Directory declare, that this Note is intended to be an answer to Lord Malmesbury's two Notes of the 17th and 19th of December. The first accompanied the delivery of the two Memorials in which our overtures for Peace were contained, and the second declared the reasons why our Plenipotentiary could not give in an Ultimatum upon them all. Both expressed his willingness to discuss all the proposals of his own Court without distinction, or to listen to any counter project on the behalf of France, for the conclusion of a general Peace.

If the Proposals of the Directory will not admit of this exposition, for which Mr. Erskine and the
Opposition

Opposition contend, they are abandoned by both, as being too outrageous and extravagant to admit of excuse. Surely the Country will not give credit to an interpretation which is directly contrary to the meaning of the words made use of, and which is inconsistent with the language of the Papers, the nature and tendency of the transaction, and the express declarations of the parties concerned.

Yet it is upon these grounds that Opposition proclaim, in both Houses of the Legislature, that the Nation is at war for Belgium alone. It is upon such reasoning that Mr. Erskine retails it to gentlemen, in octavo; and to the vulgar, in humble duodecimo. Supported by these arguments, a Gentleman of Mr. Fox's talents, and a person of the Duke of Bedford's consequence, harangue the mobs of Westminster; and solemnly affirm, that Peace is within our reach, and that the Country is undone unless it is attained *.

But

* As to the Orators of Guildhall, I count not of them. It is not such a thing as Mr. Waddington that can provoke animadversion.

“ I'd hang a calf's skin on his recreant limbs.”

Superior turbulence will sometimes rise into that notice, which shall demand a lashing. But I cannot be expected to characterise Alehouse Politicians, who are scarcely known in the street which they inhabit. I need not warn the people of this Country from supposing that the clamour of Guildhall speaks the sense of the City of London. It might as well be supposed, that a mob in

Palace

But tearing off that flimsy veil of sacrifice which hides from this people, that we are offered up as victims to destruction for the aggrandisement of France, let us examine the true state of the fact. Our Ambassador presents conditions upon which the Country is willing to conclude a Peace. He offers either to discuss them, or any other terms, which France may choose to propose. The Directory will do neither. They declare, that they have read our Memorials, but refuse to receive them, from a false and frivolous objection to their deficiency in form. They do not require other Memorials; but, with blundering, ignorant insolence, they demand an Ultimatum within four-and-twenty hours. The Ambassador declines compliance with a demand which was in its nature absurd and impossible; but he signs the Memorials,

Palace Yard, who shouted applause at what they could not hear, and assented to what they could not understand, evinced the sentiments of the inhabitants of Westminster. A Petition containing the grave and weighty resolutions of the first commercial city in the world, would have been moved and seconded by Merchants worthy to take the lead on such a solemn occasion; by men whose names are heard with veneration upon the remotest shores to which Commerce has taught the value of exchanging the diversified productions of Nature. Men of large property, of extensive knowledge, of great commercial influence, would have crowded the Common Hall, to testify the opinions of the City.—It is not draymen, porters, and handicraftsmen, who are qualified to speak the sentiments of the City of London upon the question of War or Peace.

and

and renews his offer of candid and conciliatory discussion. It is replied, that the Directory "will " listen to no proposals contrary to the Constitution, to the Laws, and to the Treaties which " bind the Republic." They therefore put a direct negative on our Proposals of Peace, and they refuse to deliver in any of their own. Looking only to their design of prolonging the War, by captiousness, aggression, and insult, they dismiss our Ambassador with ignominy; and they over-top that insolence, in which they reproach our anxiety for Peace, by changing the mode of Negotiation which they had pointed out themselves, and retracting that basis which they had professed to adopt. The form was to be changed from the medium of an Ambassador, to the intervention of Couriers. The principle was no longer to be that of Restitution, for Great Britain was to have nothing; and the Emperor was to have nothing; it was an observance of the Constitution, the Laws, and the Treaties of France, upon which we were to agree to form our propositions for Peace.

The reason, therefore, upon which the War is continued, is not because the Restitution of Belgium is refused by France, but because the Republic absolutely refuses to treat with us at all, except upon a basis so unjust and extravagant, that the Opposition of England will not venture to defend

defend it*.—They are aware of the consequences which a knowledge of the true state of the Negotiation would have on the public spirit. They labour, therefore, to distort and pervert its obvious sense, that they may seize upon some pretence for the justification of France, and the censure of the Cabinet.

The Nation may learn to estimate the extravagance of the basis, by a plain narrative of a few of the necessary consequences of its being admitted.

* Mr. Erskine may now find a clue which will enable him to understand Mr. Pitt's speech. The Minister attacked the declaration of the Executive Directory, that they would listen to no proposals which were contrary to their Constitution and their Laws, and their Treaties, not as an ill-founded reason for resisting the cession of Belgium, but merely as an injurious principle which France insisted that we should admit, previous to any Negotiation, and without which they positively refused to negotiate at all. When Mr. Pitt, therefore, shewed that the principle was unjust and ill-founded, he proved that this Country ought not to agree to it; and as France positively declared, that she would not treat unless we did acknowledge it, he made it evident, that nothing remained for this Country but to continue the War. I could have wished that Mr. Erskine, for his own sake, had spared his aspersion, when it rested upon such grounds, " that he could not help being struck, in the moment, with the force of that characteristic infirmity, which seems to impel him, as it were by a law of his nature, always to act on one principle under the pretext of another." Such flippancy but ill becomes a learned Gentleman of rank and character. He would have been taught its impropriety, if he had ventured to make the observation in his place in the House of Commons.

We

We should engage thereby to surrender all our Conquests in the East and West Indies, without insisting upon any compensation whatever; because the French Constitution has declared, that all the dominions of their ancient Monarchy constitute an unalienable part of the Republic, one and indivisible. Upon the same principle, we must acquiesce in their possession of the Netherlands, of Savoy, Avignon, and all Germany to the Rhine. We must assent likewise to their retention of Maestricht and Venloo, which secure the absolute dominion of Holland, because they are made part of the Republic by her Laws. With respect to those Treaties which she is pleased to consider as binding upon her, we should engage to guarantee every thing for which France has stipulated, although it should militate ever so much against our own interests, and this without the slightest previous knowledge of what these articles were. If, according to common report, the Treaty between Prussia and the Republic has contracted for the secularization of the Ecclesiastical Electorates, for the overthrow of the Germanic Constitution, and the aggrandizement of Prussia, to the ruin of our faithful Ally the Emperor, we must submit, because we are pledged not to contradict, by our proposals, those Treaties which bind the Republic. Should any secret article in the Treaty between Spain and France provide, that we are to cede Gibraltar or Jamaica to the former, as a price of that War which she has

declared against us, our compliance is contained in the very basis upon which we have agreed to negotiate. Should it be a condition in any of her Treaties, that the Contracting Parties shall exclude from their ports every vessel from England, we bind ourselves to seal, with our own hands, the ruin of our Commerce. Or should they reciprocally stipulate that the Belligerent Parties will not lay down their arms till every ship taken by Great Britain during the War shall bere stored, we give an unqualified consent to weaken our own Navy, and to recruit the Fleets of our Enemies. In short, however absurd, disadvantageous, or disgraceful the conditions, although they should go to the utter ruin of Europe and of ourselves, as many of them would do, we are bound to admit them without discussion, compensation, or murmuring, provided they are enjoined by the Constitution, the Laws, or the Treaties which bind the French Republic *.

But

* This conduct, on the part of the Executive Directory, runs very parallel with that of the Allies in the War with France at the commencement of this Century.

The Marquis de Torcy was sent by the Most Christian King to the Hague, in the year 1709, and made very advantageous offers to the Allies, in his Master's name. Our Ministers, as well as those of the States General, thought fit to refuse them, and advanced other proposals in their stead; but of such a nature as no Prince could digest, who did not lie at the immediate mercy of his Enemies. M. de Torcy, after discussing the matter

But Mr. Erskine says *, that we are at War for Belgium; "since supposing all other obstacles could be removed, this territory, upon the footing of the late Negotiation, remains an insuperable bar to Peace."

This argument concludes nothing. The Restitution of the Netherlands was not absolutely in-

with them, assisted the British and Dutch Plenipotentiaries, at their own desire, in the style and expression, when they were drawing up their demands. He put them in the strongest language which he could find; and then insisted to know their last resolution, whether these were the lowest terms the Allies would accept. Having received a determinate answer in the affirmative, he spoke to this effect :

" That he thanked them heartily for giving him the happiest day he had ever seen in his life. That, in perfect obedience to his Master, he had made concessions, in his own opinion, highly derogatory to the King's honour and interest. That he had not concealed the difficulties of his Court, or the discontents of his Country, by a long and unsuccessful War, which could only justify the large offers he had been empowered to make. That the Conditions of Peace now delivered into his hands, by the Allies, would raise a new spirit in the Nation, and remove the greatest difficulty the Court lay under, by putting it in his Master's power to convince all his subjects how earnestly his Majesty desired to ease them from the burden of the War; but that his Enemies would not accept of any terms which could consist EITHER WITH THEIR SAFETY OR HIS HONOUR." Such sentiments inspired all France with courage to contend against and surmount those dangers that encompassed her. But France had no Opposition who would justify her Enemies to the People.

* Page 108.

listed upon ; for we offered at least to discuss the point. But the Directory spurned at the proposal ; and proffered a basis of Negotiation which was absolutely inadmissible. Although we had acceded to the avulsion of Belgium from the Emperor, hostilities must continue, since France has laid impediments in the way of Peace, even more insurmountable ; and these she must remove before the Netherlands can become an object of Treaty.

There are people who admit, that the Executive Directory was determined not to accept of any terms short of an unconditional submission on the part of Great Britain, and yet who blame the Cabinet for not having originally proposed the Cession of Belgium to France, in order to manifest to the People of that Country our wishes for Peace, and the extravagant pretensions of its Rulers. When they desire us to make such an important sacrifice of our own interests and those of our Ally, they ought at least to shew how it was practicable to accomplish the object which they propose. They ought to prove farther, what it is impossible to prove, that the despotic Government of that Country, supported by the Military, would have been influenced by such sentiments of the People, if we could have excited them. But I shall not agitate the point ; because it assumes what I never can concede, that this Country ought to acquiesce in the Consolidation of the Netherlands with the French Republic.

This event, should it ever occur, will strike a vital blow to our prosperity. It is for our interest, as well as for our honour, to support the Emperor with our utmost resources, while he is willing to attempt the recovery of Belgium. A country so fertile, so cultivated, so abounding in inhabitants, who are remarkable for industrious and simple manners, would add greatly to the Power of France, wherever it was placed. But situated as it is, opposite to and out-flanking our coasts, it gives that strength to our Rival, which is peculiarly dangerous to us. The existence of Holland as an independent State was secured by her having France and Austria as her neighbours, whose mutual interest it was to prevent her from falling into the hands of the other. But the removal of Austria will leave that country a defenceless prey to the Republic. Indeed by the possession of Maestricht and Venloo France has anticipated this consequence, and already secured its subjection. The whole territory which passed to Maximilian from the House of Burgundy, that rich country which was the nursing mother of manufactures in Europe, will be thus occupied by an enterprising Power, who has capacity to restore it to its pristine consequence at our expence. The maritime resources of the Netherlands, and the undivided market of Germany, will add incalculably to that strength whose exorbitance is already dangerous and alarming. Possessed of harbours infinitely superior to those which we have on

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the contiguous side of our island, she may issue forth to destroy our trade, and invade those kingdoms at her pleasure. But what is still more important, she will shut us completely out from all connection with the Continent. Partly by her controlling power, and partly by her intrigues, she may close many of those markets against us, which are kept open at present, through a wish to retain our alliance. We shall thus lose all means of dividing the strength of France in case of War, by engaging the co-operation of other States, who are jealous of her ambition and her power. These and many other reasons have operated with all the great statesmen who have directed our Councils for centuries, to intercede with our whole force, that they might prevent the annexation of the Netherlands to France. The unremitting ardor with which France has, in every period of her history, laboured to acquire them, is the most decisive proof of their value to her. When it is once established that it is of importance to her to retain them, it becomes an object of the first consequence to this Country to prevent it. These reasons, and this invariable practice of our wisest and best Ministers, will make it something more than madness if we should ever consent to surrender these provinces, while we can command a guinea or a soldier to struggle against it. But Mr. Erskine comes forward to oppose the maxims of our Ancestors, avowing that he is unacquainted with the importance of the Netherlands to Great Britain *.

How any gentleman can undertake to advise, where he is ignorant of the main point in the case, it is for himself to determine. Happily for the Empire, it is in the People's power to slight his councils. He conceives that it is useless to consider the danger of suffering Belgium to remain a part of France, because we may gain an object of much greater importance by surrendering it. His words are*,—“ But to speak plainly and boldly my opinion with regard to Peace is this—That when the relative situations of the two Countries are considered, the cession of Belgium to the Emperor, the arrangement concerning St. Domingo, or any other specific line of Negotiation, are as dust in the balance, when compared with THE SPIRIT AND TEMPER of the Peace which hereafter shall be made.”

“ Supposing, by our great resources and by the chances of War, we could drive the Government of France to recede from her present pretensions, *not* upon the approach of a new æra of security, confidence, and friendship, but to avoid a political explosion, by the destruction of her credit; consider coolly what sort of Peace this would be—where the hostile mind remained;—consider how easily France might again embroil us, to the hazard of our finances and

“ of our Constitution, which leans absolutely upon
“ public credit for support.”

He concludes with asserting in the same spirit*, that if “ *we* (i. e. England and France) were truly “ friends upon liberal principles, War must for a “ century be banished from the earth.”

How would our Ancestors, who, whether Whigs or Tories, were all Englishmen, and as such jealous of the national honour and prosperity, have endured to hear the surrender of Dunkirk, not to talk of all Flanders and Holland, defended upon principles like these? If we are to concede every thing to France which she may desire, as a sacrifice to her friendship, the argument will extend to the surrender of Portsmouth and Plymouth, or the Kingdom of Ireland. But if we are to inquire into the value previous to the concession, Mr. Erskine should not have advised the cession of Belgium until he had ascertained its importance. God forbid that this Country should be reduced to such a contemptible state of imbecillity, that we are to part with every muniment against the aggressions of France, through idle hopes of her friendship, or unmanly terror at her enmity. Of what value is our wealth or our Constitution, if they are held upon the precarious conditions of forbearance on

* Page 125.

the part of the Regicide, or of the proudest Conqueror who can display his banners to the remotest extremity of the earth? Our dearest treasures are converted into sources of our misery, if we are tortured with the dread of losing what we have neither courage to defend nor powers to enjoy.

It is sentiments like these which have ruined all Nations who have sunk under the victor's sword.—They enervate that noble spirit which swells with enthusiasm and joy in a perilous enterprise for a noble cause.—They anticipate the consequences of subjugation, and reconcile us to slavery before the manacles are prepared. If we are to submit to a second conquest, let us submit without disguising our baseness from ourselves. After the first pillage, France may incline to spare her subjects, and treat us as she would the inhabitants of Picardy or Brabant.—But if we are the Sons of Freedom, and are willing to fight for our inheritance, let us recollect how the Poet describes and apparels the Goddess :

When Freedom, dreft in blood-stain'd vest,
To every Knight her war-song sung,
Upon her head wild weeds were spread,
A gory anlace by her hung ;
She daunc'd on the heath,
She heard the voice of Death ;
Pale-eyed Affright, his heart of silver hue,
In vain assailed her bosom to aquail.

To

To talk of Countries like France and England being kept in Peace by mutual affection, is to feed our apprehension with green and girlish trash, unwholesome and distasteful to a manly mind. There is no principle of League between Nations, but that of mutual interest; there is no means of preventing aggression, but shewing that we are enabled to repel and avenge it. Self-interest is the uniform director of the politics of every Government. It operates more powerfully in the Councils of a Nation than in those of private men. The latter are restrained by that curb of opinion, which man in society imposes upon his neighbours and himself; but States consider themselves as placed beyond such controul. So uniform is their practice, that a very different and much more loose system of Ethics is admitted to influence their conduct, without reproach, than would be tolerated in common life. When uniform experience has thus taught us what man is, and what his conduct will be; we must act upon these conclusions, however they may contradict our wishes and our fancies. These principles apply to every Nation, every Country, and every Climate. But, as between France and Great Britain, they are considered as fundamental axioms, by which their conduct towards each other has been uniformly regulated. I will quote an authority on the point to Mr. Erskine, which may have greater weight with him than either the principles of Human Nature or the example of Centuries.—It is the speech of Mr. Fox, delivered in
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the debate upon the Commercial Treaty in 1787. At that time his mind retained the characteristics of an English Statesman. He delivered it as his opinion, that the only situation in which Great Britain could stand in Europe, with honour, dignity, or safety, was as a counterpoise to France. He shewed that this was the uniform practice of the Country in the most flourishing periods of her history. He scouted the idea of perpetual amity with that Nation; and proved that she was our natural and necessary Enemy, from situation. Contrasted in their interests, and co-equal in their power, the Countries must ever feel all that can keep them rivals, and place them in perpetual opposition to each other. The argument of Mr. Fox was applicable to that Power under every change in its Constitution. He has demonstrated that our mutual animosity did not arise from temporary circumstances, or the antipathy of one Government to the other; but that the French Nation was actuated by a regular, fixed, and systematic enmity to this Country, and that when she opened her arms to us with professions of friendship, it was through an insidious wish to complete our destruction*.

These were the sentiments of a fine understanding, formed upon a thorough knowledge of the

* Debates, February 12, 1787.

dispositions

dispositions of our Rival, joined to an intimate acquaintance with the interest and the situation of the two Countries. Is Mr. Erskine doomed to follow Mr. Fox only when he is wrong, and to desert him when he happens to be right? If he is to think for himself upon questions of policy, he must be content to read, to investigate, and digest. He has in truth much to learn, and the labour will be severe; but the first fruits of such culture will amply repay him. He will despise such petty, truckling, unprofitable sentiments as he now advances, sentiments which it would be ruinous for the Nation to follow, and which are unworthy of their Author to propose.

Having examined all the material positions of Mr. Erskine's book, I might here conclude,—but circumstances have arisen since I began to write which call for our particular attention. New overtures have been recently made by the Executive Directory to treat separately with the Emperor. Informed of this circumstance by our faithful Ally, Ministers have dispatched Mr. Hammond to Vienna to negotiate a general Peace in concert with him. This step will at least evince to the Country that Administration are earnest in their wishes to put a period to the calamities of War. If, unhappily, it should fail of success, it leaves us no other resource but the vigour of our arms.

Although

Although I would not anticipate such an event, yet it is right that we should be prepared to meet it. If the implacable malice of the Directory will not grant us Peace upon honourable conditions, we must resolve to face our Enemies with that manly mind which is suited to our ancient character.

We have to contemplate what the conduct of the Emperor may be, and what conduct it becomes us at all events to pursue.

It has been said by one Gentleman, that if Peace cannot be made in conjunction with the Emperor, we ought to conclude it alone, rather than continue the War. I will indulge the hope that there is no other man in this kingdom capable of suggesting the advice, or delivering the opinion. It would at once destroy that confidence in English honour and fidelity which has been so nobly supported by this Country in all her intercourse with foreign Powers. How could we again raise our heads in Europe, after the sacrifice of a faithful Ally, who is ambitious of Peace and moderate in his terms, to an inglorious attention to our immediate convenience? Are we to leave no distinction between the conduct of Great Britain and that of a Continental Monarch, whose treachery is the prime source of our calamities, and the subject of universal execration. No man has more vehemently condemned

condemned such perfidy than the Right Honourable Gentleman who has suffered this opinion to escape him.—No man has been more ready to prophesy the inevitable result of such crooked policy.

But his council was not less foolish than degrading. We are at all times bound to interfere for the protection of Austria, against the superior power of France. We do so from a sense of our own safety; since, if that Empire were destroyed, France might over-run Europe at her pleasure. To have followed such advice, therefore, during any period of the War, would have been to pursue a policy ruinous and unnatural to our own interests. But when we consider the time when this exhortation to the breach of a solemn treaty was delivered, it renders it not less wicked than impolitic. The question is not now, whether we shall abandon Austria to her fate, and conclude a Peace separate from her, but whether she shall do so by us? France is exerting every nerve to detach her from our Alliance, and she could devise no means so effectual as to inculcate the notion that we desire to abandon her. If the Emperor should ever suspect our faith, both interest and revenge will drive him to conclude a separate Treaty with the Republic, and leave this Country to contend alone against her. Yet it is at this season, when the constancy of our Ally is assailed by misfortune, and he is tempted

to

to defection by alluring offers from the Victor, that the Leader of a British Opposition proclaims to a British House of Commons the expediency of a separate Peace with France.

This Country is composed, I trust, of nobler metal, and will never abandon the Emperor while he is willing to continue the War, for the common object of a safe and honourable Peace. I do not fear this stain upon our national honour. The more immediate danger is, lest, broken down by disasters, Austria should be compelled to submit to whatever terms the Republic may choose to impose. France looks to Peace with that Power, that she may turn her whole force to the conquest and the pillage of this Country. It is for this reason that we must exert our most strenuous efforts to prevent it. I certainly retain considerable confidence, that not even the successes of Buonaparte can detach the Emperor from our Alliance. Pressed as he is on every side, the fortunes of the House of Austria are not so low as they were when Maria Theresa was obliged to fly from Vienna, with her infant son in her arms, and to throw herself upon the generous Nobles of Hungary for succour. Her illustrious descendant is worthy of the blood from whence he sprung. This gallant Prince is animated with that just and honourable spirit, which is the loveliest grace of Monarchs. His subjects have manifested a noble ardor and an unshaken loyalty worthy of such a Sovereign. No defeat has re-pressed,

pressed, no calamity has daunted it. Let us hail the generous spirit while it is still dwelling upon the earth. It is the best blessing of a People.—It is their consolation in misfortune, their antidote against disgrace, their firm bulwark against oppression, and will prove the sure pledge of ultimate success. If, undismayed by the calamities of a War which desolates the very heart of their Country, the Emperor and his People refuse to conclude a separate and disgraceful Peace, does it become Great Britain to shew less courage, less honour, less constancy, less disregard of present comfort, or less zeal for her independence, than the Countries which are washed by the Danube or the Mulda? —If the Emperor despairs to break his Alliance with us, although the French demand it in thunder at the gates of his Capital, what are we called upon to do, who are relieved from a similar calamity by his exertions?—Would it be wise, would it be honourable in us to refuse him that assistance which can alone enable him to resist with success our mutual Enemy?

Much and very groundless clamour has been raised against those Loans which we have already sent him. If these sums were necessary to put the Power of Austria in motion, in what other way could we have employed them to the same advantage? If to annoy the Enemy is our object, surely there are no other means by which we could

create an equal force at such a small expence. To the assistance of Austria we have hitherto stood much indebted. It has withdrawn the attention of the Republic from her Marine, and protected this Country from a menaced invasion. I am well aware that the Nation, rising in its strength, would tear any number of invaders limb from limb, and scatter them the sport of adverse winds upon our shores. But still their continuance upon our coasts, though but for a single day, would do us much mischief. The Funds would sink in value. Works of industry would no longer proceed; and the tranquil occupations of life must cease, with a loss infinitely greater to the Country, than the total amount of her remittances to Vienna. This question, therefore, is reducible into a very narrow compass.—Our Alliance with the Emperor is the only means by which we can hope to attain the chief object of the War. A Loan is necessary, both to secure and render it effectual. Is there any man, therefore, who can conscientiously advise us to forego a measure so essential to our success, and even to our defence?

There is still a third situation in which we may be placed, and which we ought to be prepared to meet. The Emperor may be fatally driven to a separate Peace, and this Country may be compelled to continue hostilities alone. We should, in that event, be encompassed with numerous and sore

fore dangers. But although a situation of peril, it would leave no room for dismay, much less for despair. We have sufficient force to overcome the efforts of all our Enemies, if our spirit should only prove equal to our strength.

The Balance of Europe would be destroyed by this event, beyond our single power to restore. But as some counterpoise to the overgrown dominions of France, we must retain all those valuable conquests we have hitherto made. I have not yet heard it whispered, that we ought to relinquish these territories to our Enemies without an equivalent. I do not know of what stuff the heart and mind could be made, which should dare to propose such ignominy. These possessions were gained by the valour of a British Navy, and of British Troops; and the hand which acquired, is able to defend them. If the Republic, determined to attempt our utter destruction, refuses to comprehend us in the supposed Treaty of Peace, the struggle will be no common one; it will be between the single but the utmost strength of France and Great Britain. Although we should stand thus opposed, yet the comparison of our respective resources ought to inspire this Country with confidence of success.

Those who have passed lately through the territories of the Republic can speak to the extent of her sufferings. Her population decreased, her marine annihilated, her commerce and manufac-

tures ruined, and the industrious spirit of her people destroyed. The preternatural force of Requisition, which enabled that Country to overwhelm Europe, is now passed away. The Executive Government can no longer seize property at pleasure, or force the People in droves to slaughter. To the ruin of her own finances, the Addresses of the Directory, and the resolutions of her Legislature do most conclusively speak. She has expended the wealth of France, of the Netherlands, of Holland, and the plunder of Germany, on the War. All that remains from the lavish waste of this universal robbery is the wealth of Italy. It supports her in this last great impending effort, which, if we are able to resist, the conditions of Peace will remain in our hands.

This is no fancied picture of the situation of France. The difficulty which she has found to recruit and re-organize her armies on the Rhine after the defeats of the last campaign, paints the fact with the pencil of truth. If other testimony were wanting, the expressions of her own Minister record it to the most ample effect *. That wild

* M. Delacroix, in his conference with Lord Malmesbury, gives his opinion of the situation of France in the following words: " Dans le tems Revolutionnaire tout ce que vous dites, " my Lord, etoit vrai—rien n'egaloit notre puissance ; mais ce " tems n'existe plus. Nous ne pouvons plus lever la Nation en " Masse pour voler au secours de la Patrie en danger. Nous " ne pouvons plus engager nos Citoyens d'ouvrir leurs Bourse " pour les verser dans le Tresor National, et de se priver " meme du necessaire pour le bien de la chose publique." —

Official Papers, page 55.

spirit

spirit of enthusiasm which enabled the French to endure whatever their Rulers inflicted, and to execute whatever they prescribed, has at length subsided. Exhausted with War, strained with exertion, and worn down by the most sanguinary civil discord, they remain inert and breathless in the hands of their Government. Neither a Revolution nor a Republic have charms any longer for the ears of France. They serve only as melancholy catch-words to bring back to their memory all they have undergone, of murder, of rapine, of confusion, of terror, of having suffered every thing, and having gained nothing. It is a fact so notorious, that we hear it from the captives in our prisons, that the body of the people both detest and despise that new Constitution which is called "a free " Representative Republic," by the Opposition of England alone. They wish for the Restoration of Monarchy; but taught by the unexampled calamities of past changes, they would rather endure the vilest Government, than risk an alteration upon the hazard of a new Revolution.

When contrasted with such a Nation, what has this Country to fear. Let her view her true situation, not with the jaundiced eye of Opposition, but with the impartial and anxious regard of one whose interest it is to investigate the truth. Her soil is not wet and reeking with the blood of her best inhabitants, spilled by the perjured judgments

of Revolutionary Tribunals. The property of her Merchants is not confiscated to State purposes. Her people are not compelled to take up arms, and led handcuffed to the field, under the insulting appellation of Volunteers. We have an unbroken military strength, and a victorious Navy. We have a Constitution worthy of preservation; and, thank Heaven, we possess the means to preserve it. Survey the general face of the Country, and then determine whether our Wealth, our Commerce, or our Industry are decayed. The National Credit continues unshaken, notwithstanding the declarations of Mr. Fox *. Our Public Debt is in a train of speedy liquidation †, in derision of the prophecies of Mr. Sheridan and Mr. Erskine. Many and great burthens have undoubtedly been imposed upon the People; but they have principally fallen upon the rich. The season of hostility, however, is not one of profit or national advantage. It necessarily brings many calamities upon the People; and they will fall with partial

* See the subject of the Bank's refusal to pay in specie considered at length in the Appendix.

See the Report of the Secret Committee appointed to examine the state of our finances. It abounds with statements which, I trust, dissipate any alarm in the Country as to the consequences of continuing the War. Among other consoling truths, it is proved that the National debt will be discharged, by the funds already appropriated to the purpose, in 33 years, according to the most favourable calculation; and in 54 years, according to that which is least so.

heaviness

heaviness on particular classes of society. These events are to be deplored. They arise from the imperfections of our nature, and no community can ever shake them off; but are they on that account the less to be endured? When two mighty Nations make their dreadful appeal to the Arbitrator of battles, it is not to be managed as a contest of mockery and sport. It is beyond human discretion either to limit its extent or to foresee all its consequences. If our antagonist will pour forth the whole wealth and population of his dominions to overwhelm us, we must summon up an equal force to resist. In such a conflict, we shall have much to suffer, but it will be nobly suffered to a wise purpose. Even such miseries are pleasure and prosperity, when weighed against the fatal effects of unconditional submission and an abject Peace.

If we could but credit the Opposition, we have a panacea for all these calamities in a new Administration. Every thing must go on prosperously if they are suffered to negotiate a Peace. Mr. Pitt is personally obnoxious to the French.—They suspect his sincerity, and would grant more favourable terms to his Rival.

It is a curious censure upon a Minister, that he is hated by our Enemies. It is a new principle in politics, that the terms of a Treaty are concessions of favour, instead of alternate stipulations, exacted

by necessity. How can the Directory suspect the Minister of insincerity, when it is they who have provoked the War, and who have repelled every advance towards Peace? Patiently reviewing the whole conduct of this Opposition since the commencement of hostilities, is there one prudent man who can allow that they are fitted to conclude a Peace? In every single instance in which the interests of this Country and those of France have been opposed, they have joined with the Republic. They have disparaged our cause, depreciated our condition, and argued for our Enemy. The Declarations and Manifestoes of France have furnished those arguments and topics which an English Opposition have illustrated and enforced. Not contented with borrowing such justifications for the Republic as she has vouchsafed to put forth, they have invented others where they could find nothing accommodated to English feelings.

The mischief of such conduct is infinite. It gives a false weight and colour to the arguments, and insinuations, and accusations of the Directory against this Country. It inspires the People of France with confidence in their Government, when they perceive that their Executive employ such just and cogent arguments as excite assent from an English Party. It not only gives strength to our Enemies, and enables them to persevere, but it dispirits the People of this Country. Much and

and deservedly as the French Legislature, under all its forms, challenges reprobation, it has fallen into no such antipatriotic guilt. Intemperate, and furious, and sanguinary, and unrelenting as their Parties have been, we can meet with no factions who have declared for the Enemies of the Republic.— Their debates were filled with no encomiums upon England; with no despondent Addresses; with no depreciation of the national energy and resources; with no violent censure of those measures of the Executive Government which respected the prosecution of hostilities.—Divided in every thing else, they were unanimous in their efforts to aggrandize the Country, and to render the War successful.

But conduct, which was disdained amidst all their animosities, by Jacobins, and Maratists, and Regicides, was reserved to decorate an English Opposition, during the prosecution of a just and necessary but unsuccessful War. It is a Party in England who have discussed the conditions of Peace, as if they had been delegated from the French Republic to prepare us for the yoke. They have calumniated our sincerity,—they have depreciated our offers,—they have beaten down our demands,—they have justified the most extravagant pretensions of the Republic. What is there which could become a British Statesman that they have not omitted?— What is there which could be required from a Subject of France which they have not performed?

Well may the Executive Directory look forwards to that change of Administration which they boast that they will exact from our national impatience. Neither Reubell, nor Carnot, nor Le Reveillere Lepeaux, nor the insidious Syeyes, could demand more advantageous terms for France than our Opposition has spontaneously approved.

Upon what principles could such men come to negotiate, excepting upon those of unconditional submission? Shall we be mad enough to choose for the Guardians and Judges of our interests persons who have already decided against us? Their opinion respecting the deplorable situation of this Country has been long declared. They represent us in the gulph of Bankruptcy, of Ruin, and Revolution. They have argued that neither Belgium, nor St. Domingo, nor any other of our pretensions, should impede a Peace. These opinions are not anxiously concealed from the knowledge of our Enemies. They are avowed,—proclaimed,—palpable,—notorious. They are as evident to France as to Great Britain, and cited in the public newspapers of that Country, as a justification for the expulsion of our Ambassador, and as reasons for the refusal of our proposals. With what success could such men resist any thing which it might please the Directory to demand? Could they even counterfeit a shew of resistance to her most exorbitant pretensions?

It

It is not such men and such councils, that can restore this Empire and Europe to its ancient position. France never has yeilded, and never will yeild, the most trifling point which she believes that this Country will surrender rather than continue the War. If Peace is to be procured at all, it is to be procured by men who shew that they do not despair of the Country. Mr. Hammond's Mission will teach us much. No one after it can even mutter that Ministers are insincere. The situation of the Emperor makes him anxious to negotiate, and we can have neither wish nor object in a continuance of the War without him. If this Negotiation should unhappily fail, let us not disgrace ourselves and dispirit our Allies by new supplications. Peace must be ultimately within our reach; but it is to be sought by noble fortitude, by manly perseverance, by a choice of death before an ignominious escape from the contest.

Peace loves and dwells with the brave.—We cannot win her by petitions, and humiliations, and genuflexions; we must woo her in the firm voice of a great People, who prefer eternal War to a compromise of our safety and honour with either wealth or fear. Ours is not a contest for an idle name. The interest of a Nation can never be separated from the preservation of its honour.—When that is lost, the peasant will feel misfortune following his ploughshare, and the manufacturer will deplore the calamity upon his loom. It is

the first truth of history, that every Nation who has loved Peace too well, has been vanquished and undone by the soft attachment. When the Goddess of Wisdom shouts to War, the People who do not kindle at the sound are abandoned by Gods and men. Let England never forget that she who presides over the spear is the Patroness of Industry and the Protectress of the Arts.

Those Petitions and Addresses for Peace into which Opposition would advertise us, can only spread discontent at home, and supply our Enemy with courage and perseverance. This clamorous impatience will increase the insolence of French demands; and, like flies caught in the spiders' meshes, we shall entangle ourselves more deeply by our struggles to get free.

Of this we may rest assured; that at whatever period the present contest may terminate, its advantages will rest with that People who have spirit to persevere. The Nation which first withdraws its confidence from the Executive Power, through a rash ardor to terminate hostilities, will leave it to her Rival to dictate the conditions of Peace. The Rulers of France already build upon the impatience of Great Britain. Their addresses, their papers, their debates, rest upon it as the main reason for continuing the War; they hold it forth to the French that perseverance will insure our acquiescence in whatever conditions they shall choose to prescribe.

But

But I trust that some portion of the Roman mind still dwells within the Country. It is my fondest hope, that, in the noble spirit of our forefathers, we can bear any thing but discomfiture and disgrace; that we still look to what is becoming our rank, our power, and our past glory. Our interests, as an industrious, a manufacturing, and a commercial Nation, never were, and never can be, separated from them. They have risen with our military prowess, and they will perish with it. The War was commenced with the concurrence of the People. Do they wish to conclude it degraded and beaten in the eyes of Europe, without one of their injuries redressed? Terms were proposed to the French Government, which they have not dared to disclose to the French Nation *. They have not done so, lest, satisfied of their moderation, this Revolutionary People should have risen in a mass to compel the Directory to accept them. Is it possible that the People of England wish to sue for Peace

* This circumstance is not a little worthy of public notice. While the Directory conceived that their conduct in the Negotiation could not irritate the French Nation, they anxiously published all the proceedings. But when we had given in our proposals, they put a stop to the publication, and neither disclosed them, nor stated the substance of the Conference between Lord Malmesbury and M. Delacroix. After dismissing our Ambassador, they published in the *Redacteur*, (a Government newspaper similar to our *Gazette*,) a false statement of Conditions so exorbitant on our part, that we could scarcely have ventured to propose them at the gates of Paris.

upon

upon worse terms than the people of France would have been willing to accept? We are again making an attempt to procure it upon honourable terms. If War should be inevitable, let us prepare to sustain it as we ought.

The Power of France is not sufficiently great to terrify us; but it is so formidable that it ought to unite us. Let us not weaken our strength by distracted Councils, and by divided wishes. To prevent this, I have ventured to raise my feeble voice. I call upon the Country to act and think as if influenced by one common interest, and inspired with one soul. I adjure them in the name of God and Nature; in the name of every tie which binds man to social intercourse; in the name of every generous feeling which ennobles, and of every tender emotion which gladdens life, to sustain their own course and that of Europe, as the world demands it of them.—Whatever animosities may divide us; whatever misfortunes may depress us; whatever private calamities may assail us, let us consider that it is the happiness and the honour of England which we must defend. It is not a petty territory nor paltry distinction for which we are called upon to shed our blood; it is in a cause for which our ancestors have been prodigal of life. It is for our Laws, our Religion, and our Families; for all that is connected with public good, and with private happiness. Let us not

“ lay

"lay the flattering unction to our souls," that Peace is to be attained by moderation, concession, or by the immense sacrifice of Belgium. Experiment has followed upon experiment. Nothing can purchase Peace for Britain but Victory, or the utter prostitution of all that she holds in estimation. I call that God to witness who judges me as I write, and who is the Arbiter of my life, that what I have said is the result of conviction; that it springs from the bottom of my heart.

APPEND.

the same time, that the other or chief part of the same
is to be made, so that the whole may be made
according to the original design. This is
done by the help of a compass and a straight
edge, and is called a compass and straight
edge. It is necessary to have soft and fine
but not too soft, and not too hard, so that
it may be right for the compass and straight
edge, and for the compass and straight edge to be
made of wood, so that the compass and straight edge

A P P E N D I X.

REMARKS on the supposed Scarcity of SPECIE.

No circumstance has occurred during the War which seems to have influenced the public opinion so strongly as the situation of the Bank, which made the interference of the Executive Government necessary upon a late occasion. Mr. Fox has thought proper to represent it as the Euthanasia of National Credit; but when its causes are thoroughly examined, it will be found that the capital of the Country never was greater, or the solvency of the Bank more indisputable than it then was; that the pressure did not arise from any of those measures to which Opposition impute it, but from the idle panic of some individuals, and the mercenary traffic of others. It will also be evident that the measure by which it was counteracted was wise and salutary; and that the conduct of those individuals who had caused it, if it had not thus been put a stop to, would have proved eventually pernicious to themselves, and hurtful to the interests of the Country.

Every one who attends to the situation of things in this Country, knows that a great part of its capital is put in motion by Paper Currency. If the people shall all at once reject this Paper, and insist to have Gold and Silver for it, it is obvious there must be great temporary embarrassment. The Banks who issue it, keep by them only such a quantity of Gold and Silver as is necessary to answer the usual purposes of their trade carried on in its *ordinary* and accustomed manner. They are therefore *not* in a situation immediately to answer the *extraordinary* demand which is made upon them. The Gold and Silver, the use of which has

has been supplied by the Paper Currency, has found its way abroad ; for not being wanted, it was impossible to keep it at home. The Banks, therefore, must have time to bring it back. This they will very soon be enabled to do by means of their capital ; for Gold and Silver, like all other commodities, are to be purchased. Like them, too, they find their way to the place where there is the greatest demand for them. From their nature and bulk, they are more easily transported from place to place than any other commodity, and are therefore more speedily procured to supply a temporary demand.

All this is very obvious to a reflecting mind, and it is of the utmost importance that this subject should be fully understood ; I therefore refer the intelligent reader to Dr. Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, vol. ii. pp. 17. 149. 151. and 330. where he will find these positions amply illustrated and proved beyond the possibility of contradiction.

This reasoning is farther confirmed by the fact, which always does happen, namely, that whenever there is a run upon the Country Banks the pressure falls upon the Bank of England. The Country Banks, by means of their capitals, are enabled to purchase Notes of the Bank of England. These are immediately poured in upon the Bank, in order to get Gold and Silver to answer the great and unusual demands which are made upon the Country Banks. But as the Country Banks are enabled, by means of their Capitals, to purchase Notes of the Bank of England immediately, because these Notes are in the Country, so if necessary the Bank of England will presently be enabled, by means of its Capital, to purchase Gold and Silver, which they are prevented from doing immediately, only because all the Gold and Silver wanted are not in the Country, and must be brought from a distance.

In the late crisis to which the alarms of weak individuals gave rise, the pressure as usual fell upon the Bank of England ; and in such a case the Bank had, in the ordinary course of things, only one of two alternatives to adopt—either it must have stopped payment all at once till a supply could be procured—or as the Public insisted upon departing from the accustomed manner

ner in which they had conducted themselves, so the Bank must have had recourse to a new and extraordinary method of answering their demands. The former would be productive of so much mischief, that it ought not to be resorted to but from extreme necessity. The latter is only an alleviation of the evil. The one would put a total stop to the whole industry of the Country, and produce a shock from the highest to the lowest situations, the extent and effects of which are incalculable. The other would produce great inconvenience, but its effects might not go beyond a temporary hardship.

The latter expedient, however, is one to which the Bank of England has had recourse formerly. It has been obliged to pay in Sixpences; and it is obvious that if the Directors had resorted to this expedient upon a late occasion, they would have answered all the demands which could have come upon them, and have thus procured time till the panic, which produced the run, should have subsided, or if necessary till they had increased their store of Gold and Silver. By so doing, however, they would not have answered one hundredth part of the demands, which they are in use to do every day. Their clerks would necessarily take time to tell out the sum of every demand twice; the receiver must necessarily do the same. They are not bound to receive a new demand before they have satisfied a former one; and the time which this new mode must necessarily have taken, would have enabled them to answer only a very few demands in the course of a day.

But such a mode, though they were entitled to resort to it, would have produced infinite mischief to a Country whose manufactures are so multifarious, and whose commerce is so extended as that of Great Britain. The Executive Government stood forth boldly, nobly, and humanely, as the common friend of the Bank and of the Public. By enabling the Bank to resist the torrent of Paper which was poured in upon it, the good sense of the Country was roused, and opposed to the folly of the authors of the mischief. They saved the Country and relieved the Bank; and every good subject, who has a particle of intelligence, will applaud the measure as at once wise, salutary, and effectual.

The more sensible among us, freed from the panic which the conduct of certain individuals had occasioned, will attend more particularly to the nature of Paper Money, and satisfy themselves that so far as regards it, there was no ground of alarm. By means of Paper Money, the whole Gold and Silver, the place of which it supplies, is added to the fixed Capital which it was formerly only the means of putting in motion.—It becomes a part of the *circulated* in place of the *circulating* Capital. It is in this way that Paper Money is beneficial:—it increases the fixed Capital of the Country, and by this means more of that Capital is put in motion. But it is the Capital put in motion which employs the labour and industry of the Country. The Capital put in motion also determines both the quantum of labour and industry of the Country, and likewise the amount of the circulating medium. The labour and industry of a Country may be less than the Capital of a Country is able to employ, but it never can be more; for there must be the means of rewarding labour and industry, otherwise labour and industry will not be exerted. In like manner, the quantity of circulating medium of a Country may be less than the amount of its Capital would require, but it never can be more; for as it is used only to put the fixed Capital in motion, the amount cannot go beyond the demand. It is impossible, therefore, for a Bank, or for any number of Banks, to circulate more Paper than the Capital of the Country requires to put that Capital in motion. If ever at any time they do put forth more Paper than the Capital of the Country requires, it must immediately return upon them. The intelligent reader will find these positions amply and aptly illustrated by Dr. Smith, in his 1st Vol. p. 441, et seq.

The late run upon the Bank, therefore, must have been occasioned either by too much Paper being put forth, which returned upon them, because it was not wanted; OR it must have been occasioned by the unreasonableness of the people in insisting to have immediately that specie which the course of dealing and their own former conduct had made it impossible they should have.

That it was not occasioned by too much Paper is obvious from this circumstance, that more Paper is wanted than

than the Bank will put forth, as is evinced by the complaints that the Bank has narrowed, and will not enlarge its discounts.

If this is so, (and there can be no doubt that it is so,) then the only question is, Are the Banks equal to pay their debts?

Whether they are or are not must be matter of inquiry to every man, so far as relates to the particular Bank which issues Notes in his neighbourhood; but though I cannot ascertain the fact in regard to each particular Bank, I can state with confidence that Bankers in general are equal to their debts, and that this is obvious from the run which has been made upon the Bank of England: for this run, as already said, was occasioned by the Country Banks being obliged to purchase Notes of the Bank of England in order to provide Cash; and the very circumstance of the Country Banks being able to purchase these Notes, shews that they were equal to their debts. Then the question resolves into this, Is the Bank of England equal to its debts? If there could be room for doubt upon this point, it has been completely removed by the investigations in Parliament of the situation of the Bank. The result is before the Public, and it is unnecessary to state it here. It is to be hoped, therefore, that the fears of the People are subsided;—when they do, all measures in regard to this matter are needless.

The Opposition however, with a view to throw obloquy on the Minister, have ascribed the want of Gold and Silver to the remittances made to the Emperor.—This assertion produced a double mischief. It tended to raise a national clamour against these remittances, which I state boldly and distinctly were the most useful and least burdensome expenditures which this Country has sustained since the commencement of the War. It tended also to mislead the Public mind, and to make them believe, that their embarrassments were owing to a cause which had no existence in reality.

The former of these positions it is beyond my present purpose to establish at large;—that there was no founda-

tion for the latter will have already appeared evident to those who have attended to the first part of this Note. It however deserves a more particular consideration.

Before making the assertion the Opposition ought to have inquired, 1st, Whether there were at present less Gold and Silver in the Country than in common years; 2d, Whether the remittances made to the Emperor were entirely in Gold and Silver sent from this Country; or, Whether the Gold and Silver sent him was purchased abroad by means of commodities sent from home; or, Whether it was sent him from home purchased by commodities formerly sent abroad. They ought to have inquired, 3d, Whether Gold was not exported by individuals at the present moment, and whether the remittances made to the Emperor increased the total amount of bullion which would otherwise have been exported. If they had proceeded in this manner to ascertain the fact before they made the assertion, perhaps a regard to themselves would have restrained them from making it at all.

I have no means of ascertaining accurately the first fact, namely, Whether there is at present more or less Gold and Silver in the Country than heretofore; but, reasoning upon commercial principles, I have no hesitation in saying, that there is more now than there ever was at a former period.

According to the authority to whom I have referred in the passages alluded to, it is plain, that the quantity of Gold and Silver in a Country is always in proportion to the demand; and the demand is always in proportion to the quantity of Capital necessary to put the whole labour and industry of the Country in motion. In Great Britain therefore there is always more Gold and Silver than in any other Country, because her sum of labour and industry is out of all proportion beyond that of any other Country in Europe. And there is more Gold and Silver in Great Britain at present than at any former period: 1. Because her Commerce is greater than ever it was at any former period, and her labour and industry are in proportion to her commerce: 2. Because the amount of Paper

Currency

Currency in circulation is less than ever it was at any former period.

This last fact will be obvious from the following considerations :

Ever since the spring of 1793, the Bank of England have not discounted by a large proportion Bills of Exchange equal to the amount of what they were in use to do. This narrowing of their discounts has produced three consequences. 1. It has diminished, to a certain extent, the quantity of labour and industry which otherwise would have been put in motion. 2. It has obliged our Merchants to bring from abroad Gold and Silver to supply, as far as they could, the deficit which the want of discounts from the Bank occasioned. 3. From the activity and enterprising spirit of our people, it has occasioned a want of circulating medium and a consequent embarrassment : for our people have still exerted their labour and industry, and their exertions have been beyond the sum of *Money Capital* in actual circulation, which has been supplied to a certain extent by individual credit.

This embarrassment has been farther increased to a great degree by a measure which became necessary at the commencement of the present Session.

It will be remembered that five millions of Exchequer Bills were issued to relieve the temporary embarrassments of our Merchants 1793. Another million of Exchequer Bills was issued to relieve the distresses of the Merchants of Grenada. Navy and Exchequer Bills to an immense amount were also issued on account of the Public Service. The total amount of the Navy and Exchequer Bills in circulation at the commencement of the present Session was seven millions and upwards when they were very properly funded.

The measure of funding them was right in itself ; and with that I do not mean to quarrel ; but this measure produced consequences which bear immediately upon the point I have stated. These Navy and Exchequer Bills were a medium of circulation to their full amount minus

the discount ; and when it is considered that so large a sum of circulating medium was thus at once withdrawn, and this too at a time when there was a demand for its increase, the wonder is not that embarrassment has been felt,—but that this embarrassment has not been much greater.

That this circumstance has not produced even more embarrassment than has been actually felt can be accounted for only in two ways : 1. A part of the Capital which was kept up for speculations in the purchase of such Paper had found its way back to the usual channels of production or industry. 2. The deficiency has been partly supplied by the Gold and Silver which the export of our manufactures has enabled our Merchants to bring from abroad.

The clamour therefore which the Opposition have raised on account of "Money sent to the Emperor is completely without foundation. Though every sum which has been sent him had been in Gold and Silver, it would quickly have returned (and where Gold and Silver were sent they quickly did return) into the coffers of our Merchants. But the prejudice against exporting Gold and Silver is one of ancient date ; and though long ago exploded by every man of understanding, it is yet of deep root in vulgar apprehensions. In such a crisis every considerate man, who looked only to the well-being of the State, would have been anxious to allay the uneasiness of the Public mind. It had arisen not from one cause, but from many. It was necessary to proceed with caution, and to investigate with coolness ;—yet, without stooping to examination, the Opposition at once ascribed the situation of the Country to one single cause. Their clamour was bottomed in a popular prejudice. In such a case, there might have been hesitation in resorting to a popular prejudice, even though it had been well founded ; because it might increase the Public uneasiness, which it should be an honest man's first object to remove. But if the prejudice had been investigated it would have been found without foundation. Yet these men rashly resorted to a popular prejudice, and ascribed to a particular measure, consequences which could not result from it at all. How deplorable for the Country, and how degrading to the individuals

dividuals concerned ! Such are the dreadful effects of Party, that it blinds its votaries to every consideration, but the accomplishment of Party purposes. In the most critical situations of the State its real interests are forgotten, and its dignity and safety sacrificed to self-interested views.

The Leaders of Opposition cannot be ignorant that Gold is exported at present because its value is higher on the Continent than it is in Great Britain ; and it will be impossible to prevent its exportation till the price shall rise higher in England than it is on the Continent, or till its value on the Continent shall fall. So long as a standard guinea is intrinsically worth more than one and twenty shillings, it cannot be otherwise than that the Gold Coin of these realms will be melted down. It is a serious evil when the market price of Gold rises above the mint price ; but such is the cause at this moment, and is one cause of the late run upon the Bank. There subsists a permission to export Gold Bullion, but there is a prohibition against exporting Gold Coin. Guineas are therefore melted down into Bullion for the purpose of exportation. To prevent this inconvenience, Dr. Smith (vol. i. p. 67) recommends a small duty or seignorage upon the coinage of Gold and Silver. The expedient certainly promises to answer its purpose. Still, however, a measure of this kind deserves serious consideration before it is adopted ; for in cases of this sort an alteration very often produces effects directly the reverse of those which were intended.

I will defend the Minister only in such measures as I believe to be right. In one thing I think him greatly to blame. He has never fairly met the public exigency, or required from the people such a sum as was necessary for the pressure he had to sustain. This conduct certainly has contributed to the embarrassment which has been felt. All payments have been in arrear ; and to relieve the temporary pressure, Exchequer Bills to an immense amount have been issued. This expedient, which at first relieved, ultimately increased the mischief. Public Paper fell to an immense discount. The buying and selling of it became a trade ; and though productive of great profit to the dealers, it was attended with great loss to the Public. Money was kept up by the Capitalists for speculations in these

these purchases, and the whole Capital, which was employed in this trade of unproductive industry, had been withdrawn or withheld from the channels of productive labour. Besides the loss in reproduction, the whole loss arising from discounts ultimately fell upon the Public, whose debts were thus increased, without any equivalent, by a sum equal to the amount not merely of the discount, but of the depression of the Public Funds in consequence.

The Public should, therefore, discriminate between Paper Currency which bears a discount, and that which does not. Wherever it bears a discount, it is hurtful; when it passes at its representative value, it is beneficial.

A plan to remedy the inconvenience which arose from this inability in the Bank to answer its demands in Specie has been suggested by the President of the Board of Agriculture. It is only conspicuous for its superficial flimsiness, and its palpable inconsistency.

I. It confounds *Bank Paper* and *State Paper*, though the distinction between them is as great as that between good and evil. It certainly is impossible to controul the extent of the latter; but it is not only possible to limit the quantity of the former, but in fact it limits itself. It is determined, as I have already stated, by the quantity of Capital required to be put in motion. The sage Baronet has travelled to Sweden and America, and cast an eye upon France to prove the mischief of the unlimited issuing of Paper. The fact is true, and the observation is just, but it applies only to *State Paper*. He might have found a more apposite instance nearer home. In Scotland there is not a town, nay hardly a village, where there is not a Bank which issues Notes. In Edinburgh there are four Banks which issue Paper; in Glasgow the same number; in Paisley, Greenock, Stirling, Perth, Dundee, Montrose, Aberdeen, Leith, there are more than one of such Banks, yet no inconvenience is felt by this unlimited circulation of Paper. The instance justifies the reasoning that it is impossible for a Bank, or any number of Banks, to keep in circulation a greater quantity of Paper than the Capital of the Country requires. States can issue more,

more, but the mischief is seen and felt by that depreciation of their Paper which ensues.

2. This plan supposes that "the necessity of suspending the payment of Cash at the Bank, can only be attributed to its having too large a proportion of Paper in circulation, compared to the amount of its Specie." The supposition, as I have already shewn, is completely wrong. The necessity arises from the fact, that the people insist to have a larger proportion of Specie than they have been accustomed to receive, and which is not at all requisite for the common purposes to which it is applied. The necessity will cease to exist so soon as the panic leaves one set of the people, and so soon as the fall of the price of Gold and Silver removes the object of profit, which is the motive with those of another description.

Proceeding upon these two grand and fundamental mistakes, we could have little hope that the remedy would prove efficacious. But it is singular, that conceiving the mischief to arise from an *overflow of Paper*, he first proposes to take away five Millions of Bank Paper, and then to *supply the deficiency* by the issuing of *other Paper*; and this new Circulating Paper is to consist *either* of *State Paper* or of *Notes issued by licensed Bankers*. In my humble apprehension, *State Paper* ought to be issued in no case, whatever; but if the practice must be continued, it should be issued in such manner as never to be at a lower discount than *Bills of Exchange*, which are the *Paper of individuals*; for the property of individuals ought not to be injured if possible, and their exertions ought not to be discomposed by the measures of the State. Whether it would be expedient for the State to license Bankers, or whether it would be advisable for individuals in London to institute Banks, not inconsistent with the privileges of the Bank, as they have been established by Parliament, involves considerations of great depth and magnitude; but as they are not necessary for the present discussion, I forbear to enter upon them here. It is sufficient for me at present to remark upon the inconsistency of that plan, which, supposing the mischief to arise from an *overflow of Bank Notes*, is to remedy the evil by a new deluge of *Paper*, which would withdraw from circulation

of a known and beneficial tendency, and substitute in its place either Paper of a sort that is felt to be detrimental, or else of a kind the very same with that which is to be withdrawn, but the experiment in regard to the circulating capacity of which is yet to be tried.

The worthy Baronet calls to his assistance the situation of the Bank in the time of King William, and the plan devised for the restoration of public credit by the Earl of Halifax. The name of this great man is ever to be mentioned with reverence and respectful gratitude; but Sir John Sinclair mistakes the evil which then existed, and the effects of the remedy. The mischief was the profusion of Exchequer Tallies then in circulation, and the cure was effected not by the increased Capital of the Bank, but because the sum subscribed withdrew 800,000*l.* in Tallies from the circulation.

There are such a combination of circumstances in questions of this sort, that some of them elude the investigation of the most penetrating. It is therefore safer to desist from acting, than to be forward to act. In mercantile transactions things right themselves, and in this, as in other cases, the pressure will operate its own relief. Any interference is more apt to confound and disconcert, than to aid or promote individual exertion. The one is always uncertain in its effects; the other is sure, gradual, and fixed in its operation.



F I N I S.

